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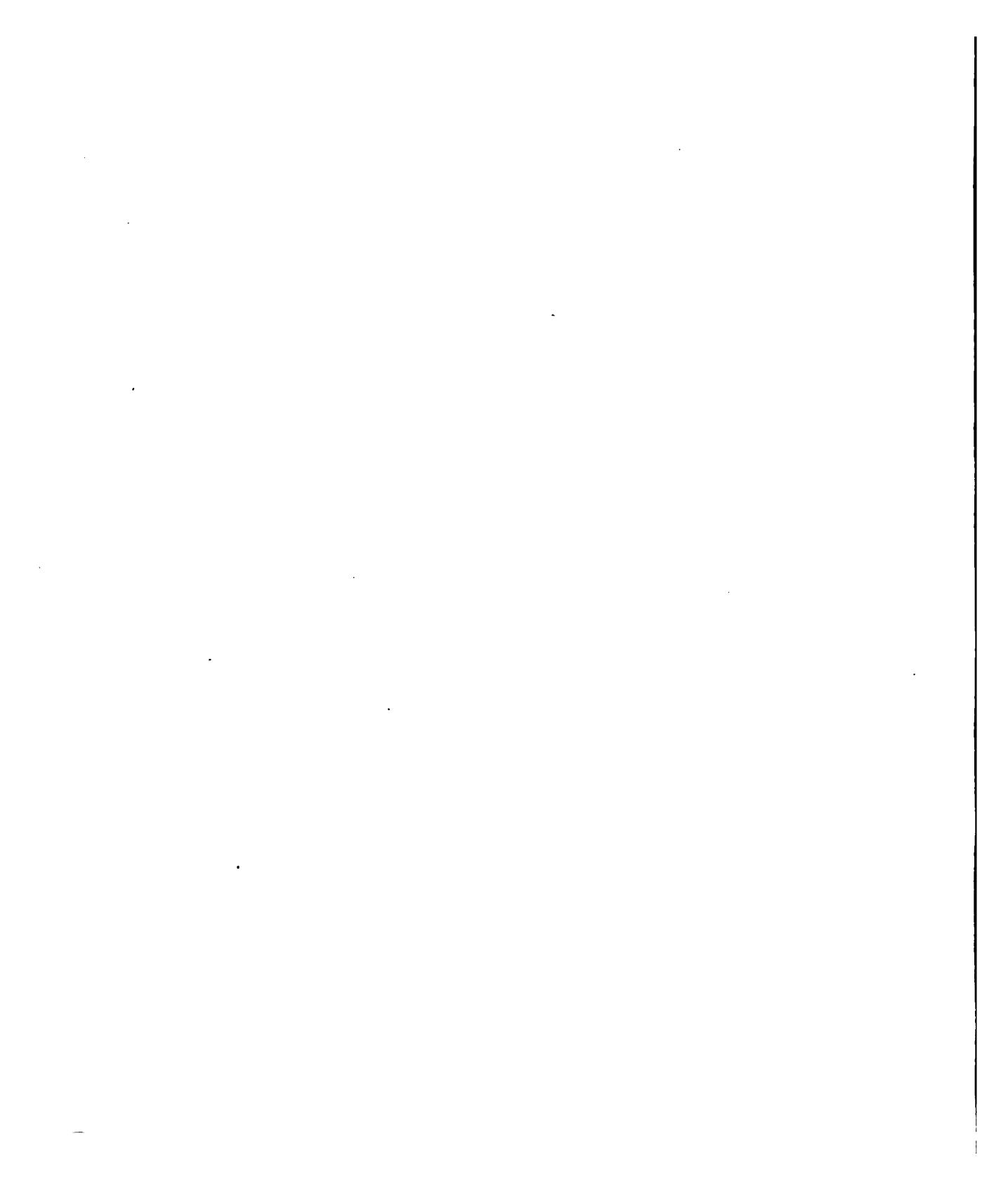
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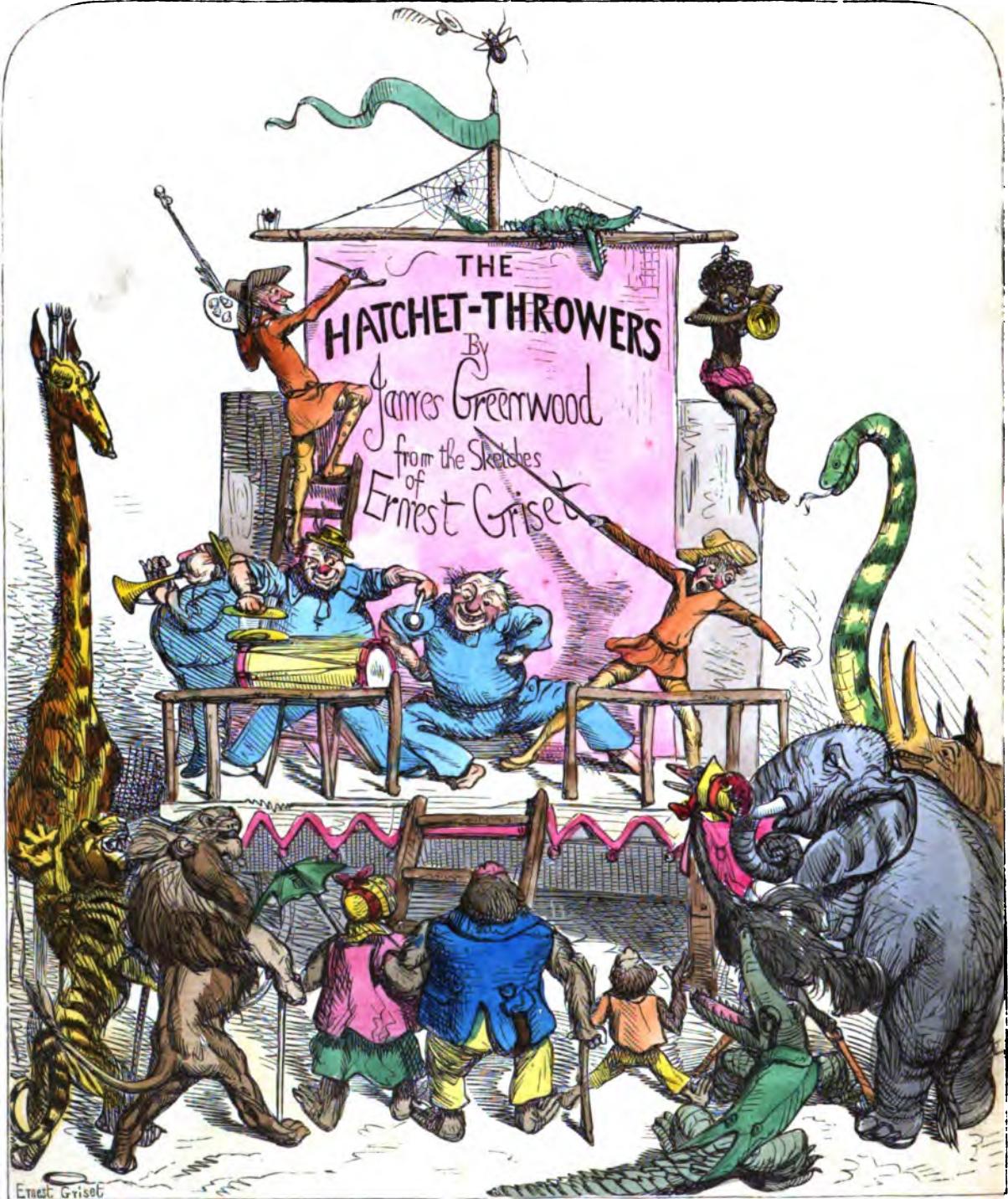






THE
HATCHET-THROWERS

By
James Greenwood
from the Sketches
of
Ernest Griset



THE
HATCHET THROWERS.
—

BY
JAMES GREENWOOD. ✓

WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS, DRAWN ON WOOD, BY
ERNEST GRISSET,

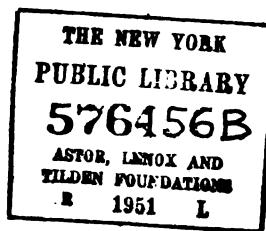
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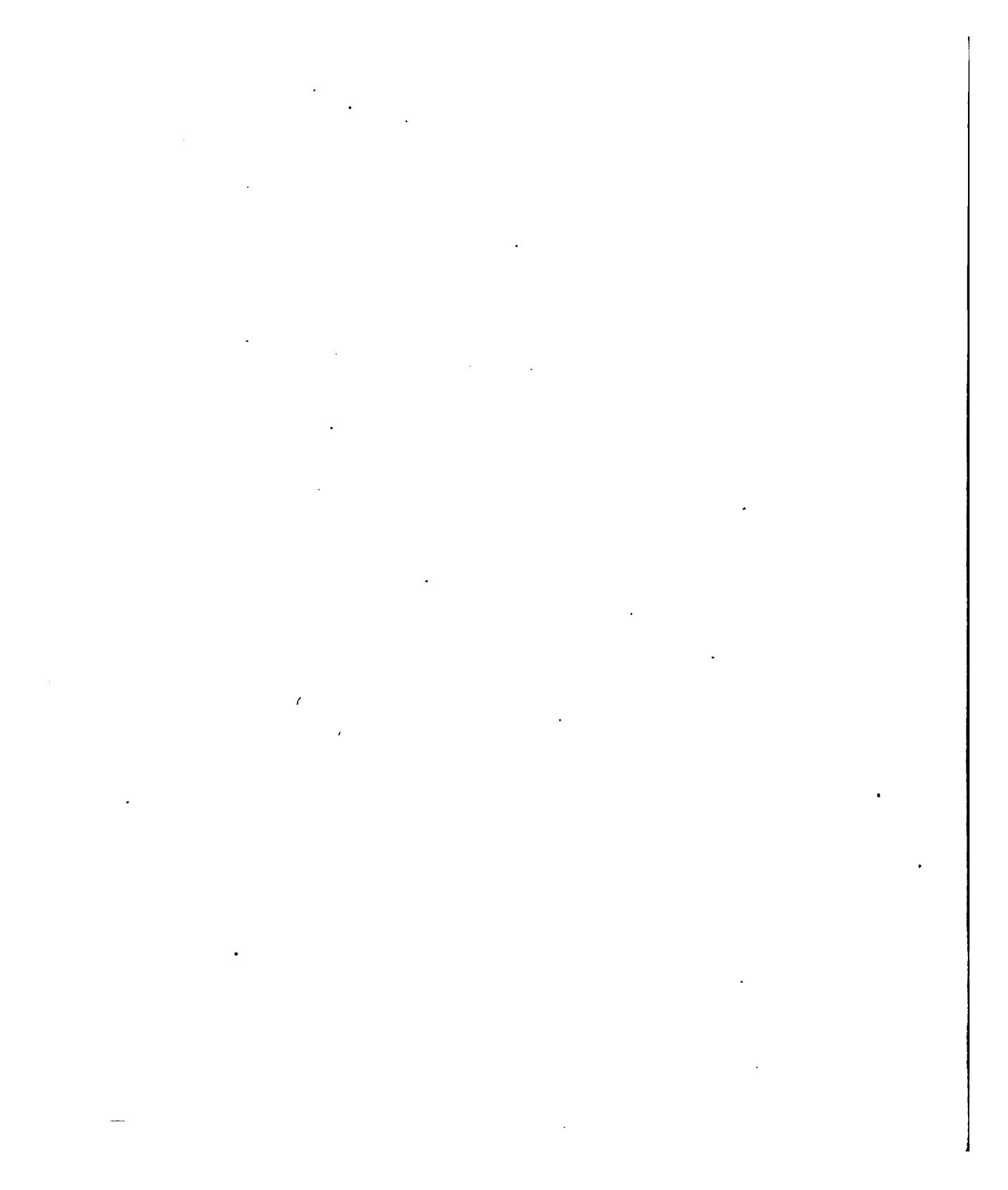


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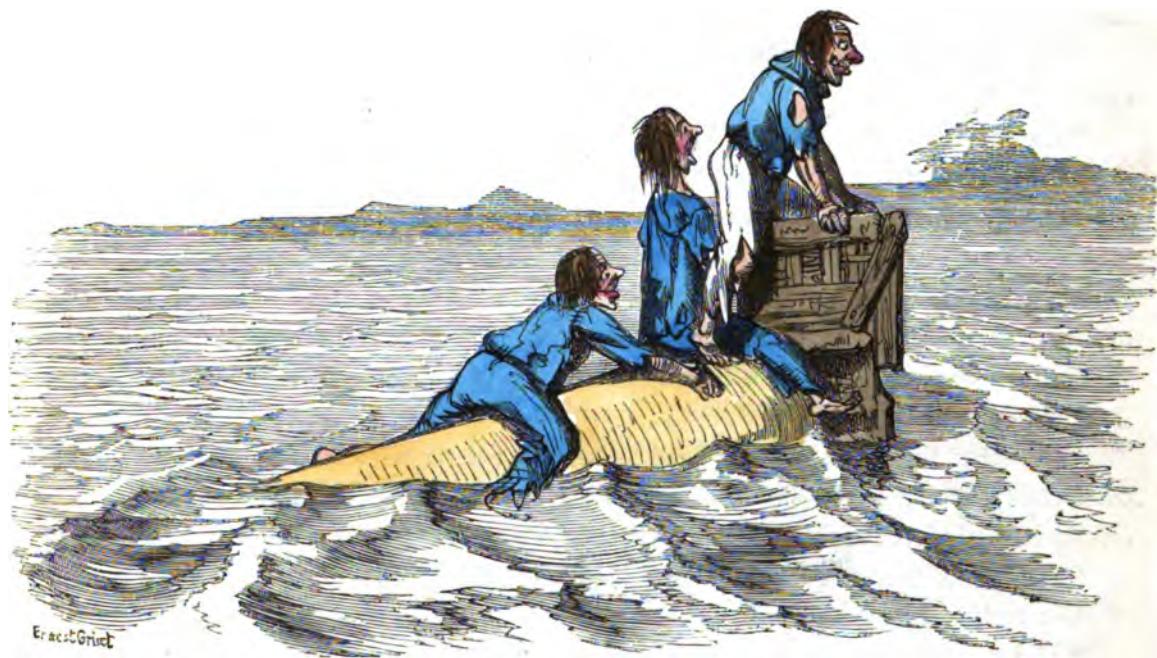
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THE ASTONISHING ADVENTURES
OF
THREE ANCIENT MARINERS.



THE ASTONISHING ADVENTURES OF THREE ANCIENT MARINERS.



THE THREE ANCIENT MARINERS APPROACH THE BARBAROUS SHORE.

“BUT tell us how it is that you three so constantly sit alone. How is it that visitors gather about mere youngsters of sixty and seventy, commonplace-looking fellows, unscarred and undistinguished by such unmistakable badges of bravery as the lopped limb and the well-worn crutch, feeding them with ‘grog-money,’ that they may relate their experiences of bloody battles fought at sea and wondrous adventure met on foreign shores, while you three battered and bald-headed ones, with only three legs amongst you, and as many iron hooks as hands, sit here solitary and in a row, like the celebrated butcher-boys, only, if one may make bold to judge by appearances, you are *not* jolly?”

Something very like a tear stood in the only remaining eye of the oldest mariner as for an instant he directed it towards me, dismally wagging his head the while.

"Cap'n," exclaimed he respectfully, touching his three-cornered hat, "you've just hit it; it's no use disguising it, your honour, we are *not* jolly. That's right, I believe, mates?" continued he, turning his eye to the right and to the left of him, with so much of emotion in the twinkling optic that it seemed almost to wink as he looked appealingly to his companions.

"'Tis so," they responded, wagging their heads until their cocked hats rocked again.

"Can it be contrairywise, mates?" again asked the elder. "Is there grounds for hoping it will ever again be contrairywise?"

"Altogether unpossible," was the despairing answer, and then the trio sighed in heart-rending chorus; which concluded, the youngest withdrew from his broad-flapped waistcoat-pocket a big brass tobacco-box, containing about half a quid of tobacco, which with touching good-nature he tenderly and equally divided with his friends, who devoured it with an avidity that told plainer than spoken words of the rarity of the luxury.

"But why impossible?"

Once more the eldest mariner fixed his watery eye on us, and kept it there while he comfortably arranged the bolus of cavendish to which by this time he as well as his companions had been assisted out of our tobacco-pouch, and then said he—

"Cap'n, did you ever hear tell on things called proverbs?"

We had, of course.

"Did you ever happen to come across one that says as how 'truth's stranger than fiction?'"

We *had* come across the proverb in question more than once.

"Werry good," observed the ancient mariner; "then *now* you know all about it, cap'n; it's just because there's truth in that theré proverb that we three can't hope ever to be anything but the contrairy of jolly. You understand, of course, cap'n? No! Why sure-ly it's clear enough. Howsomever, if you should happen to be coming this way one of thèse odd days, when I don't feel so dry and husky-like about the voice, I'll try and make it clearer. Well, no, I can't say as it's constitootional that huskiness, 'cause I never remember being troubled with it before that time—*you* recollect, Charley Phibbs—when we was cast away on Tierra del Fuego, or 'Island of Fire,' as p'raps you might better know it by, cap'n, in our lingo—in the Straits of Magellan, out in South Ameriky, as in course you're aware. As I was saying, I never remember to have been troubled with

this dryness of the mouth until we were wrecked thereabout, and lived for eleven days on pumice-stone cakes baked at the werry volcano what had womited it up. That was warm work if you like! Oh, yes, and Lord bless you, cap'n, for thinking on it, beer *does* do the complaint good; and—just like your honour's good luck—here's a boy that will fetch it in a twinkling; he isn't a very strong boy, but he'll be able to carry half-a-gallon; and, d'ye hear, boy? tell 'em not to draw that fourpenny puddle, but the best, 'cos it's for a gentleman."

When the boy came back, the three ancient mariners drank, and we—that is, monsieur the artist and the reader's very obedient servant, the chronicler—drank, after which we lit our pipes, and, there being room on the form, sat down one at either end, with the mariners between us.

"It isn't often we gets a drop of beer as good as this, genelmen," observed the spokesman; 'deed, I never tastes it but I wishes that it *wasn't* so good. It's a temptation. I get the flavour of it, and then I says to myself, 'Joseph Corker, why don't you drink more eightpenny half-and-half? What's the use of going on sacrificing yourself just for the sake of that foolish prideful feeling of telling the truth and shaming the old 'un, which you was always so chokeful of even when a boy? If people *will* have a parcel of hatchups instead of what's real, let 'em have it. If they can't stand what's the truth when you and your two chums tells it to 'em, because it sounds so very egstrorinary and re-markable—which it does, and no mistake about it—throw yourself on your invention and pitch it milder.' That's what I says to myself, genelmen, when that eightpenny tickles my palate afresh after long being a stranger; but it's on'y for a minute, bless you; then I bring-to with a will, and says I—and I call on you, Charley Phibbs, and you, Jerry Humm, to bear me out—'No, I'll stand by the old colours that I've always sailed under; I'll nail 'em to the mast, and if I can't swim with 'em, I'll sink with 'em.'"

"And we'll swim with you, Joey," remarked Charles and Jeremiah, taking the can from Mr. Corker and swigging at the eightpenny; "we *always* swim with you, Joey—leastways we have done so since that awful time we had of it together, as you must well recollect, when the old Barrycoota went down in the Indian Ocean, and when—"

"Belay, mates, belay!" interrupted Mr. Corker, waving his hook impatiently. "Is it likely, now, that I can ever forget *that*?"

"Course not, Joey," replied Jeremiah, "none of us can forget it. I'm sure it's all as fresh in *my* mind as though it wound up only this morning. No; it was your speaking of

truth being stranger than t'other that put it into my head to speak about that awfully adventurous time. Whew! what a book it 'u'd make, Joey!"

Monsieur the artist looked towards me exactly at the same instant as I looked towards him, and the winks we delivered at each other in point of rapidity and significance might have been twins.

"It 'u'd have to be a pictur'-book, then," chuckled Mr. Corker, "for I'm blowed if there's language enough in all the dictionaries that was ever wrote to explain some of them adventures."

Monsieur G. once more looked my way, and this time his wink was decidedly the most emphatic of the two, and slyly beckoning the beer-boy (who, doubtless knowing the habits of the mariners with whom we were conversing, still lingered in the neighbourhood), he handed him the can and eightpence.

"Words wouldn't be equal to the description," continued Mr. Corker—"no, not a bushel of 'em, and all as long as Nebuchadnezzar. Why, take the very beginning of it, or almost the beginning—that is, skipping the time when the dreadful leak made itself known aboard our poor seventy-four, and when the pumps were choked, and every mortal thing that could be spared, even down to the loose silver in the pockets of the officers and the gold studs the captain wore in his frilled shirt, was thrown over the side to ease the labouring vessel. It's a shame to skip over that part, too, because there's a good bit in it that shows the pluck and devotion of the British tar. There was one or two cases in pertickler, both of 'em instances of female walour, and therefore not to be forgot. Of the two females one was the captain's young bride and the other was his mother-in-law. As I said before, to lighten the ship was the order of the day, and the order was obeyed till the vessel, excepting for the water that was slowly filling her, was as empty as an eggshell, and all of us, officers and men, numbering something like five hundred souls in all, as bare almost, in consequence of stripping ourselves to add to the lightness, as a chick that had crept out of the said shell. Still the Barrycoota was found to be gradually settling down. Taking one last look at his chronometer to see what time it was, the captain cast it into the hungry ocean after his shirt-studs, and the eppaulets on his shoulders and the cockade in his hat was likewise nobly sacrificed. Still the leak gained on us. 'It's all over,' says our captain with a sigh; 'we must take to the boats. Call up Lady Fitzrocket, my wife, and her mother, and tell 'em to put their things on as quick as they can.' But they didn't need calling; he had scarcely got the words out of his mouth than such a sight smote our eyes as brought the water into

'em—which was unlucky, considering the weight of it we were already suffering under. 'Here we are, most noble captain,' cried they cheerily as they came up the cabin stairs; and there they were, but you'd never have known 'em. Although the danger the ship was in had been kept a strict secret from them, they had somehow got wind of it, and while not a soul on board dreamt of it, they were helping to lighten the ship all that laid in their power. All but their commonest gowns and their aprons and a pair of old and very thin slippers they had chucked out of the cabin window, but even then, fancying that the ship lurched a little over towards their side, the captain's wife seized her scissors and cut off all her beautiful flowing ringlets till her head was covered only with little hairs no longer than your finger-nail, on which her mother, not to be outdone, cast her wig and her false teeth into the ocean! You may guess what their appearance on the deck was like, and the effect it had on the officers and crew.'

"Howsomever, that has nothing to do with *our* adventures, Joey, no more than that it led up to 'em. The pictur' I had in my eye, and which, as I said before, no words are equal to explaining, did not appear till some time after the werry affecting scene I've just give you a glimpse of. It didn't appear, not in its full bloom, as one may say, for four-and-twenty hours after that event—after the Barrycoota, just as they were getting the boats out, went down like a leaden plummet, and so sudden that the mainmast was broke off as short as a carrot—after we three, that is, Jerry Humm, Charley Phibbs, and myself, who had only an instant before gone up aloft to see if anything in the shape of assistance was in view, found ourselves floating on the bit of mast, and no sign of the ship or of any other living soul in sight. It wasn't even then that the full bloom of the said pictur' appeared, because, though naturally werry sorry for our shipmates who had gone down in the Barrycoota, we couldn't help feeling precious glad that we had still a squeak for our lives. A narrow squeak it was, you'll say; and so it was, but we were all hale and hearty young fellows in them days, clinging to life like a cat, and never believing that Davy Jones meant boxing us for good in his locker until we heard the hasp click against the bolt. Besides, for the present we were comfortable enough inside, for our captain had ordered that every man should be allowed to tuck into as much bread and beef as ever he pleased before the barrels were heaved over, and in addition each man was served with a treble tot of grog, which each of us had likewise stowed away.

"It was earlyish in the morning when the Barrycoota went down, and only that we felt a goodish bit cramped, huddled all together at the truck end of our bit of mast, we kept

up our spirits pretty well till towards the close of the afternoon ; then we began to funk a bit. Laying out in the sun on the surface of the salt water is werry exhausting, and all we had to eat through that long day was a fish of the spike-back speshies, which had made so fierce an attack on Charley Phibbs's great-toe as it hung in the water that we had to cut his head off before he would leave go. Coming so fresh out of the briny ocean, the fish was naturally tremenjus salt, and roused our thirst most cruel. *Now we comes to the full bloom of the pictur'.* Out on the broad ocean, with only a little stick of timber between us and the deeps where thousands of ravenous monsters were waiting for us—hungry, thirsty, night coming on, and, for all we knew, thousands of miles from that land we all so eagerly looked out for ! Now aint I right—are words ekal to describe *that*?"

Monsieur G., with his hat on his knee and a scrap of paper spread on the crown of it, had during the last half-minute been wonderfully busy, and within another half-minute of Mr. Corker making his concluding observation he clapped down his scrap of paper on to the settle in front of us.

"Is that anything like, gentlemen ?" he politely inquired.

The effect was marvellous. In an instant the three cocked hats were clubbed together close as burs on a furze-bush, and various were the exclamations of admiration and delight that broke from the three pairs of ancient lips. Mr. Corker examined the picture critically.

"That's the image of Jerry Humm holding on in the middle. Ah, Jerry ! you was a better-looking chap in those days than you are now ! That's me ridin' behind, having give up the foremost look-out to Charley Phibbs, so as he might keep his sore toe out of the salt water ; and that was your wisage, Charley, fair as if it was reflected in a looking-glass at the time, which, as you will recollect, was just when the sun was dipping, when you exclaimed, in a sort of unbelieving whisper—

"Shipmates ! why, I do declare !—yes—no, it's not altogether unpossible—but still—yes, it is ! Shipmates ! we're approaching a foring shore !"

"Which was perfectly correct. What shore it was, any further than that it was a shore in the Indian Ocean, we knew no more than babes unborn. It was due east, however, that we could make out from the circumstance of the sun setting just exactly opposite to it, and, as good luck would have it, there was just enough light left to show us the sort of shore it was we were approaching. A rocky and mountaneous sort of place it looked, with just a few trees growing down to the water's edge. What pleased us better

than the trees, however, was the sight of a column of smoke rising lazily in the still evening air. ‘Hurrah!’ we shouted, ‘where there’s smoke there’s fire, and where there’s fire there’s hands to make it; and what can a fire be for at this time in the day but to cook supper?’ We were all so delighted at the idea, that had there been room on that bit of mast, and Charley Phibbs’s toe had been less painful, I do believe we should have danced a hornpipe there and then. Naturally enough we were impatient to arrive at where the



THEIR APPEARANCE WHILE TRAVERSING THE THIRSTY SAND.

cookery was going on before supper rather than afterwards, and as each moment it was growing darker, and our craft did not take at all kindly to the shore current, we agreed to swim for the island.

“It was pitch dark when, after an hour’s swim (the distance between our deserted raft and the island was at least three times farther than we expected to find it), we grounded, and, crawling up the sloping beach, planted our feet on *terry firmer*, as the poet says. Leastways, it would have been *terry firmer* if it hadn’t been so precious soft—not muddy, dusty; dust as fine as pepper, and all shining white, and after the cold water striking hot to the feet, which it covered as high as the ankles.

“ Well, we had a mind to sit down and take a spell of rest before we made for the fire, which, now that it was dark, showed brighter than ever, and broader and higher, like a great furnace. It wasn’t at all an inviting-looking fire somehow, and, to tell the truth, that was the reason why we were in no hurry to approach it. Besides which, an observation made by Jerry Humm, who, when young, though full of pluck as both the lion and the unicorn, was a bit of a croaker (it’s no use your denying it, Jerry; you’ve grown out of the weakness now, but that you was as a young man a bit of a croaker I maintain), rather tended to slacken our sailing in that pertikler direction. ‘ Come, let us put our best legs foremost, or they’ll have eaten all the meat and left us nothing but the bones,’ said I. ‘ Unless,’ remarked Jerry—‘ unless they should happen to be cannibals, and then there’ll precious soon be nothing left of *us* but the bones !’

“ This, as may be imagined, rather damped our spirits, and it was not until we had sat in the hot dust till every mite of funk was parched out of us that we agreed to push forward and chance it. And so we did for an hour or more, when—judge of our awful disappointment—when, turning a corner of a rock, we came suddenly on the fire, and found it to be nothing but a volcano !

“ Yes, a great caldron of fire, big round as the dome of St. Paul’s, and deeper than the height of the Monument, if its depth might be judged by the far-down rumbling and roaring it made continually. Only this great fire, walled in on every side by the black night, with the flame skipping and leaping up and the lurid cloud spreading above it, making it look like a gigantic yellow demon in a crimson nightcap, gone mad with Saint Vitus’s dance, and escaped from his home in the bowels of the earth. If ever three poor fellows were miserable we were that three, and I have no doubt if a troop of cannibals had at that moment burst out on us, of the two we should have been rather glad to have seen them.

“ What we were most sore in need of was water. We were dry as poppy-heads. I don’t believe there would have been found in us moisture enough to have damped a sponge even if we had been wrung in one of them patent wringing machines. Our tongues were so swollen that we couldn’t speak, but looking into each other’s eyes by the light of these sulphureous flames, thirst was there to be seen as plain as though every eye was a deep dry well. And all this time there was a something falling from overhead as the rain falls, but which instead was the dry, choking dust with which the ground was so thickly covered.

“ And all this while perhaps there might be water under our very noses, as the saying is, if there was only light enough to see it. The same dismal reflection seemed to strike us all at the same moment as did the means of overcoming the difficulty, for suddenly we all three looked hopeful, and, turning about, hastened to a patch of scrubby wood we had passed but a few moments before, and, reaching it, we plucked from it a few long and dry sticks, which we carried back and lit at the volcano ; and now, provided with three torches, we pushed on in search of the precious element.

“ We didn’t find it ; still, our torches did not prove quite useless. The wood of which they were made was of a very lasting and oily nature, burning, indeed, as much like a wax candle as possible, and after an hour or so of weary tramping we came to a part of the island where the forest grew thick, and as soon as we commenced to penetrate it, moths of the largest size and most gorgeous colours came buzzing and flapping about us in a manner that threatened each moment to extinguish our lights. Indeed, several times one or the other was extinguished, but that was of no consequence so long as one remained at which the others could be rekindled.

“ And now you just see how short-sighted we poor mortals are, and how apt we are to look on blessings as misfortunes. We looked on the moths as misfortunes—as plagues that would, unless we took care, certainly lead to our undoing. We beat off the moths, snatching at them and crushing their beautiful crimson, and blue, and yellow bodies in our hands, and crunching them spitefully under our feet. ‘ Confound the moths ! ’ cried we ; ‘ it would be a good thing if they were all frying in that precious volcano, since they’re so fond of fire,’ when just at that moment a fellow as broad as a mulberry-leaf plumped fairly atop of the flame of my torch, dowsing it at once, though not before its vermillion wings was burnt off and its dead body reg’lar grilled by the heat. Savage as a bear, I snatched at the poor creature’s carcass, intending to dash it to the earth, as we had done so many before ; but the fire was still smouldering at the end of the stick, and the sticky, oily moth-matter clinging to my finger-tops caused me to utter a cry of pain, and to thrust my fingers into my mouth. Not only my fingers, but the body of the roasted moth that clung to ’em.

“ Never shall I forget the delicious sensation that thrilled through me as I felt the delicious mouthful yield to the pressure of my teeth. It was all things lovely rolled into one—fatness, sweetness, food, drink. Ah ! I shall never, never forget it. I’ve tried often since to think what the flavour of that roasted moth was like, but I always fail. There was the delightful coolness of pickled salmon and cucumber about it, but at the same time

there was the smooth fragrance of strawberry-cream as well, and, just as it touched the palate, a flavouring of old Jamaiky rum; although, when you came to think on it—but there, what's the good of thinking on it?

“All I know about it is, that it made me forget all about my burns; and begging a light of Charley Phibbs, without revealing so much as a hint concerning my discovery—such is man's selfish nature—I fell to the rear and retraced the way we had come, picking up and greedily devouring the half-baked moths that marked the path we had come. I must have eaten a couple of hundred at the very least before my companions found out what I was up to; and when they did, they fell to crying and lamenting, thinking for certain that I must have gone mad, which evidence of their affection, contrasting so strongly with my greediness, filled me with sincere remorse, and running up to them with a baked moth in each hand, before they could close their terrified mouths I thrust in the tid-bits beyond their teeth, thereby quite confirming their previous suspicion that I had ‘gone off my head,’ as the saying is, until, while endeavouring to spit out the strange mouthful, they got the tail of its flavour, when they immediately began to make quite another sort of face, and, without a word, to hunt about as I was hunting.

“But, as you are no doubt aware, gentlemen, the moth is what they call a nockshurnal animal, and can't see his way about only when it is dark. Unluckily for us the day began to dawn—which it does very rapid in them outlandish parts—and in less than five minutes there was not a moth to be had for love or money.

“Now, as you may easily imagine, we had been praying for daylight; but as soon as ever it came we would have been very willing to have changed it to night again. Daylight was of no use to us; it was worse than useless, because it showed us what a perfect wilderness it was we had lighted on. As far as the eye could reach, nothing but naked rock and sandy plain, with here and there a patch of thorn-bush, or a narrow strip of rank jungle-grass, and beyond all there was the sea, flat and barren, far away, and until the sky met it. Climbing up on to a tallish crag, we looked about—not a hut, not a hovel, not the remotest sign of a human habitation! Clearly we were cast on an uninhabited island, with nothing between us and starvation but the gaudy moths that flew about at night! a dismal look-out indeed for three hale and hearty young men, each of whom was good to put away a pound of junk, with biscuit and cocoa, three times a day!

“The look-out was such an uncommonly unpromising one that we agreed it was no use to continue our search over the island. We were at least sure of *one* meal in the course of

the twenty-four hours where we were, and it was not at all sure that the moths were invariably as plentiful or as fat and large as they were at this spot ; besides, thought we, rescue can only come to us from one direction—the sea, and of that in our present situation we had a most excellent view. So down we sat in the shade of the moth-bushes, and being exceedingly tired from our constant exertion since the wreck of our ship (and for many hours previously for that matter), in a little while we all fell into a sound sleep.

“ How long we slept I shouldn’t like to say, but when we awoke the sun was high up in the heavens, and shining with so tremenjus a heat that you could hear the young and tender shoots of the moth-bushes spitting and steaming like a joint of pork hung before a fire. Howsomever, it wasn’t the blazing of the sun that woke us, neither was it the crackling of the tender shoots ; it was a much pleasanter sound than either. *It was the sound of rushing water !* ”

“ We all heard it at one and the same moment, and opened our eyes as though there was only one pair amongst us, and all together started into a sitting posture. There could be no doubt about it—swish ! swash ! swish ! It was water sure enough, but where ? We rose to our feet and looked about us. We were too far to hear the washing of the waves of the sea against the beach, even if the weather had been rough, but it was not rough ; as I said before, it was a still, blazing morning, and the sea was calm as that grass-plot. We looked to the right and to the left ; no water, not a sign of it. We looked as well as we could through the moth-bushes (they were just about as tall as we were) ; still no water.

“ But the sound continued—nay, each moment it increased in noise ; now we could hear a wheezing sort of sound as well as the swish, swash, swish, like, as I imagine, might be made by a running stream that had run till it was out of breath.

“ ‘ It’s coming towards us ! ’ exclaimed Jerry Humm.

“ So it was ; you could hear it now rustling through the jungle-grass, each moment nearer and nearer.

“ ‘ It’s a spring, that’s what it is,’ observed Charley Phibbs ; ‘ I’ve heard of springs rising in the desert before now.’ ”

“ ‘ I wish it would make haste,’ said Jerry, smacking his lips ; ‘ I long to have a swig at it. We must be careful, shipmates, that we don’t swig too hasty at first ; it might be dangerous. I shall take my drink cool and comfortable ; there’s plenty of it, as anybody may hear.’ ”

"There was indeed; there was *too much* of it. Just keep your ears open, please, Mr. Picture-maker, and I'll try and tell you how much there was of it. We never had a fair opportunity for measuring it, but I can't be far wrong when I say that we had about forty-seven yards of it. What do you say, shipmates?"

"That's about the measurement," observed Mr. Humm.

"Rather under than over, I should say," said Mr. Phibbs; "forty-seven and three-eighths would be nearer the mark in my opinion."

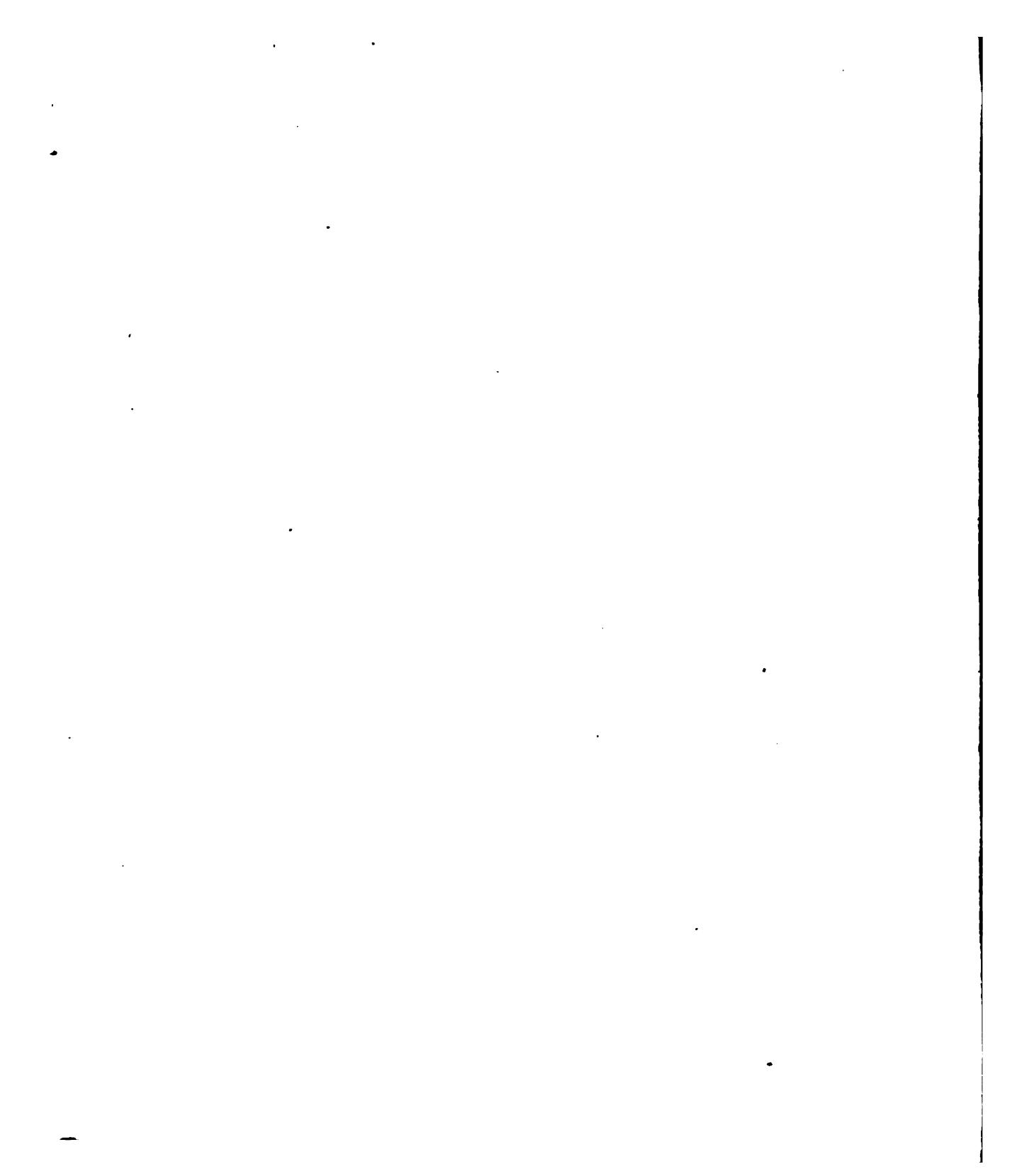
"Forty-seven yards of what—water?" asked Monsieur G., nibbling doubtfully at the end of his drawing-pencil.

"No, sir—*of serpent*. It was that horrible reptile we had mistaken for water; it was its hissing and its swishing through the grass that had deluded us, and so we remained deluded until, just at the very instant when we expected to see the bubbling, sparkling stream burst through the bushes at our very feet, there arose in the air, exactly over our heads, a hideous curved shape, glistening in all the colours of the rainbow, and at the end of the curve was a pair of monstrous jaws, red within as a coal fire, set with teeth, crooked, and at the very least the length of a man's hand, and hanging between, quivering like a wasp when it is bent on settling, a forked tongue of the colour of blue steel and sharp as a needle. That's the sort of tongue to a hair, Mr. Picture-maker. Hand up the can, Charley Phibbs. I'll just wet my whistle while the genelman is finishing the terrible pictur' of the serpent pursuing we three unfortnute mariners.

"There's a pictur' for you, shipmates! Why, if the genelman had been on the ground himself at the time, he couldn't have hit off the likenesses better, specially the serpent's. If there *is* a fault it is in the brute's tongue, which isn't quite forked enough; but there, that aint to be wondered at, as I don't suppose such a forked tongue was ever seen by human eyes as that tongue was. Whew! it quite makes my hair wet, even at this distance of time, to think how miraculously we escaped being spitted on it.

"It *was* a miracle, and nothing short of it. Famished and tired as we were, what match were we for him, a native, and used to the soil and climate? Judging from the rate at which he came along, he could have given us three-quarters out of a mile and then have licked us before we reached the winning-post. But it *wasn't* to be. Whether it was that he was only coming that way promiscuous and was a bit startled at sight of us, and so got confused in his head, or whether he smelt man, and, counting on one man, was rather nonplussed at discovering three, I never could exactly make up my mind. Anyhow, as





soon as he caught sight of us, he remained reared up just as he at first appeared, with his tongue wagging and his fiery eyes flashing in a way that was sure to fascinate you if you only looked at 'em long enough; but, as you may safely reckon, there was nothing about his eyes that had any attraction for us. Uttering three yells that most likely added to his previous astonishment, we took to our heels and ran for our lives.

“I very much doubt, however, if our heels would have saved us had not what at first seemed like a terrible and fatal accident happened to us. Jerry Humm was first in the running, I was second, and Charley, in consequence of his toe, which was not yet well, was last. We were making towards the sea, having it in our minds to plunge in and swim out a bit, in the hope that the serpent wasn’t of the hamfiberus spesches, and therefore couldn’t follow us. Jerry was first, as I think I before observed, when, sudden as the snuffing of a candle, Jerry vanished clean off the face of the earth !

“The next instant *I* vanished !!

“The next instant I was aware of falling atop of Jerry, and the instant after I was aware of Charley Phibbs falling atop of me !!!

“Now I dare say that sounds very much like a story, but half-a-dozen words of explanation will show you how easily it all came about. The hole we had fallen into was a cleft in the surface of the rock—a hole quite hidden by a little ledge that rose just in front of it. But it wasn’t simply a hole, as to our horror we discovered when we had recovered a little from the shock caused by the fall and began to look about us. It was the den of some savage beast ! Of a knowing beast, who knew how to take care of himself, for in one corner there was a heap as much as a truss of hay would make of jungle-grass, and in another corner was the hind-quarters of some animal about the size of a store pig, only that it was woolly and had hoofs instead of cloven feet; and all over the floor of the den was strewn such a great quantity of bones that now and then, when our feet sank in them, they reached higher than our knees.

“Our first feeling was one of thankfulness that we had escaped from the jaws of that horrible serpent (and that we had escaped him, at least for the present, was certain, for, mounting on Charley Phibbs’s back, I peeped over the edge of the den, and saw Mr. Serpent with a most puzzled expression of countenance looking about in every direction but the right one), and then, first making sure that there was no back way to the den, we made an examination of the meat we had found, and finding it perfectly sweet and sound, we sat down and made a hearty and comfortable meal, devouring every scrap of it.

“Feeling now considerably refreshed, we held council as to what had best be done next. Clearly it would have been madness to remain on that part of the island with a venomous beast of prey on the one hand and that dreadful serpent on the other—one of each sort at least, and goodness only knew how many more. Jerry Humm, he knew a goodish bit of nat’ral history, and when he was asked he gave as his opinion that serpents always went to sleep in the middle of the day, which was now closely approaching, and that now was the time to be off, an opinion which we were the more inclined to act up to when he further told us that beasts of prey likewise had a habit of going to sleep of afternoons, and that the identical one to which the den we were in belonged might be shortly expected home.

“So, first of all making sure that the coast was clear, off we started, and being at the north side of the island, we agreed to cut sheer across it, and see if matters looked more cheerful in the south. The meat we had eaten, whatever it was, was both tender and juicy, and eating it had satisfied at once our hunger and thirst, so that we quite recovered our spirits, and stepped out merry as kittens, all agog to reach the other end of the island, which, if there is any truth in the saying, ‘There must be two sides to a picture,’ was sure to yield us satisfaction for the simple reason that there couldn’t possibly be a dingier side than the one we were leaving behind. But that was our ignorance ; we found to our sorrow that what we took to be the dingy side was the bright side, and that—however, that was eventually—it wasn’t our fate to reach the south side of that dreadful island yet awhile.

“We may have got half across it—it was, I should judge; about five-and-twenty miles each way—and were jogging along lively as crickets, when, sudden as a thunderclap, a tremendous roar smote our ears, and looking behind us what should we spy but a gigantic tiger bounding over the plain with all the strength of his scraggy limbs, and with his bloodthirsty nose pointed directly at us.

“In an instant the terrible fact appeared to us—it was the animal whose den we had invaded—whose dinner we had stolen! He was in pursuit of us, and seeing that we observed him, he uttered a second hideous roar and increased his pace considerably. Here, then, seemed to be the approaching end to our miserable career. To expect mercy of a tiger at the best of times is to be disappointed ; but what mercy could we expect who had broken into his house and pillaged his cupboard?

“I had seen a few tigers in my time, but never one so large as this. Everything was





THEY ARE THREATENED WITH AN AWFUL PUNISHMENT FOR THE CRIME OF HOUSEBREAKIN'

of monstrous size on that island, you will observe, gentlemen, from moths to jungle serpents. Had we been possessed of so much as a stick each, I have no doubt that we should have stood our ground and fought the brute; but being altogether unarmed, the only chance we had was to run for it, and what sort of chance *that* was may be imagined when I tell you that before us, for more than half-a-mile, was nothing but a flat plain, bounded on each side by rocks too steep and slippery to climb, and that the infuriated tiger was by this time not more than a hundred yards in our rear.

“ However, our lives depended on it, and no man knows how fast he can run till that is the case. On we sped, the enemy gaining on us slowly though surely at every bound, and, as could easily be told by his rageful roaring, growing each moment more savage at having to run so far in the heat of the sun after his dinner. Closer and closer he came, until our backs were peppered by the dust he blew before him, and we were as nigh spent as could be, when at that very instant we spied a rift in the wall of rock, and a short distance up the rift a solitary tree, a straggling, withered-looking thing enough, but a precious sight to us, as you may depend.

“ In less time than it takes to tell we were in the rift, and Charley Phibbs going first up the tallest fork of the tree, which was of a sort common in those parts, growing quite naked to within a foot of the top, where there is just a tassel of green leaves. Jerry swarmed up after Charley, and I was the last. It was a miraculous thing that Jerry and Charley Phibbs were not left to share the tree between ‘em; for just as I sprang into the tree, the tiger at the very identical moment sprang at it too, and pinned the bottom part of the leg of my trousers against the trunk with the talons of his right paw; but, as providentially happened, as he did so, the breath of his nostrils, screeching hot as a jet of steam, struck me in the rear, causing me such agony that I made an extra spring upwards, leaving him the bit of trouser-leg, and saving my life.

“ Our first observation was to Jerry, who, as I think I mentioned before, was a bit of a nat’ral historist.

“ ‘ Jerry,’ said we, ‘ can tigers climb?’

“ ‘ They cannot,’ Jerry replied.

“ Whereat we gave three hearty cheers, and bundled together as close as we could at the top of the tree to await the result.

“ But though we had for the present escaped the tiger’s jaws, our position was not all as pleasant as might be wished. We discovered that the limb of the tree on which we

were clustered overhung a precipice of such horrible depth, that the bottom of it was quite invisible, while its sides were bristly with snags and splinters sharp as bayonets. If we fell, nothing could save us from pitching down this awful chasm ; and there was danger of us falling from two causes. In the first place, the tree was a very old one, and only from the fact of its being rooted in the solid rock, I have no doubt that our united weights would have prised it clean out of the earth ; and in the next place, the tiger was still our enemy. True, and as Jerry had stated, he couldn't climb ; but the ignorant beast didn't seem to be aware of it, and for at least a quarter of an hour did nothing but try, retiring a few paces and then coming at the tree with a leap, with no better luck than knocking his thick head against it each time, and driving himself madder than ever. We didn't so much object to this, only that each time he came bang against the tree it trembled to its very foundation, causing us to rock like hanging cherries."

"Like hanging cherries," echoed monsieur the artist, once more whipping out his paper and pencil. "Go on, don't mind me ; I can work and listen as well."

"You may as well keep your pencil out for the present, captain," continued Mr. Corker, once more burying his red nose in the ale-can. "I'll find you in pictures to draw if you've a mind to draw 'em. I shall be proud and happy to do so, as will be my fellow-adventurers, I'm sure, if it is only that the ignorant and mistrustful may see in black and white—in red, and green, and blue, I should prefer it, if it could be managed—how much stranger and more interesting truth is than the parcel of crammers *other people*, not a hundred miles off from this spot, are constantly in the habit of palming off on greenhorns as the genuwine article. Let me see, where was I?"

"Up the tree overhanging that there orful gulf," observed Charley Phibbs ; "you'd just got to the part—and werry well I recollects it—where that feroush tiger, finding that he couldn't climb, took to—"

"Clawing at the trunk and rending it, and biting great mouthfuls out of the bark until his fangs were all drenched red through the splinters a-lascerating his gums," interrupted Mr. Corker, promptly taking up the thread of his narrative. "It wasn't a particularly thick trunk, and there is no doubt that if he had gone at the job cool and comfortable he could have bit it through in an hour or so ; indeed, he needn't have bit it all through, the tree being, as I before told you, a slanting tree, and hanging over the gulf, so that our weight would have snapped it off before he had got half-way. Not that he would have been any better off, because nothing could have saved us from the precipice if the tree had been broken off.

“This was so very plain that even the tiger saw it presently, for suddenly pausing in his biting and clawing, he looked up to the top of the tree as though to get the dimensions of it, and then he took a squint across the gulf, reckoning up the width of it; then he scratched his head with his left paw, and lay down at the foot of the tree to think the matter over.

“Barely, however, had he crouched down, when, with a higher bound than we had yet witnessed, he was on his legs again, his whiskers twiddling in rage and his tail stiff as a marlinspike. Enough to make it. Every hair on our heads stood as stiff as his tail, and our very toes curled under in fright. I have spoken of that first roar the tiger gave when we first met him as being something tremenjus, and of the second roar he gave as being ten times louder than the first; well, coming, as it were, out of the bowels of the earth, our ears were now assailed by a roar ten times louder than *that*. The very rock in which our tree was rooted seemed to shake, and the limb we were clinging to creaked with an ominous sound. ‘Here comes the she-tiger to help the he-tiger,’ thought we, while great drops of sweat from our brows fell pit-a-pat into the gulf. ‘Now it’s all over; what he don’t know she’ll put him up to, and we shall all three be tiger-meat before another hour!’

“But in them extraordinary parts it was impossible to reckon on the full amount of the peril in store for you; you think that you’ve made up your mind for the very worst, and behold, you find it a mere flea-bite to the real thing. So it was in the present instance; instead of a tigress there suddenly appeared in view a raging, roaring lion!

“Of the two he was even more terrible-looking than the tiger, because, besides being gaunt and starved within an inch of his life, his mane and tail-tuft were tousled and neglected, giving him a most ragged and ruffianly aspect. His tail, too, was like a capstan-bar—a capstan-bar case-hardened and with a bend in it—while his jaws were agape and his mouth smoked as from the fiery redness of his outlapping tongue.

“To our great relief, however, it was plain to be seen that the tiger and the lion were not on friendly terms. It seemed very likely that if it had been a promiscuous meeting between the animals the tiger would have sheered off, precious glad to get out of the other monster’s way. But the tiger’s hunger was stronger than his prudence; he had fairly treed his game, and one can easily understand how annoying it was to have another big bully coming along to take the meat out of his mouth; so, instead of running, the tiger showed fight; he crouched down at the foot of the tree, with his hams raised and his head

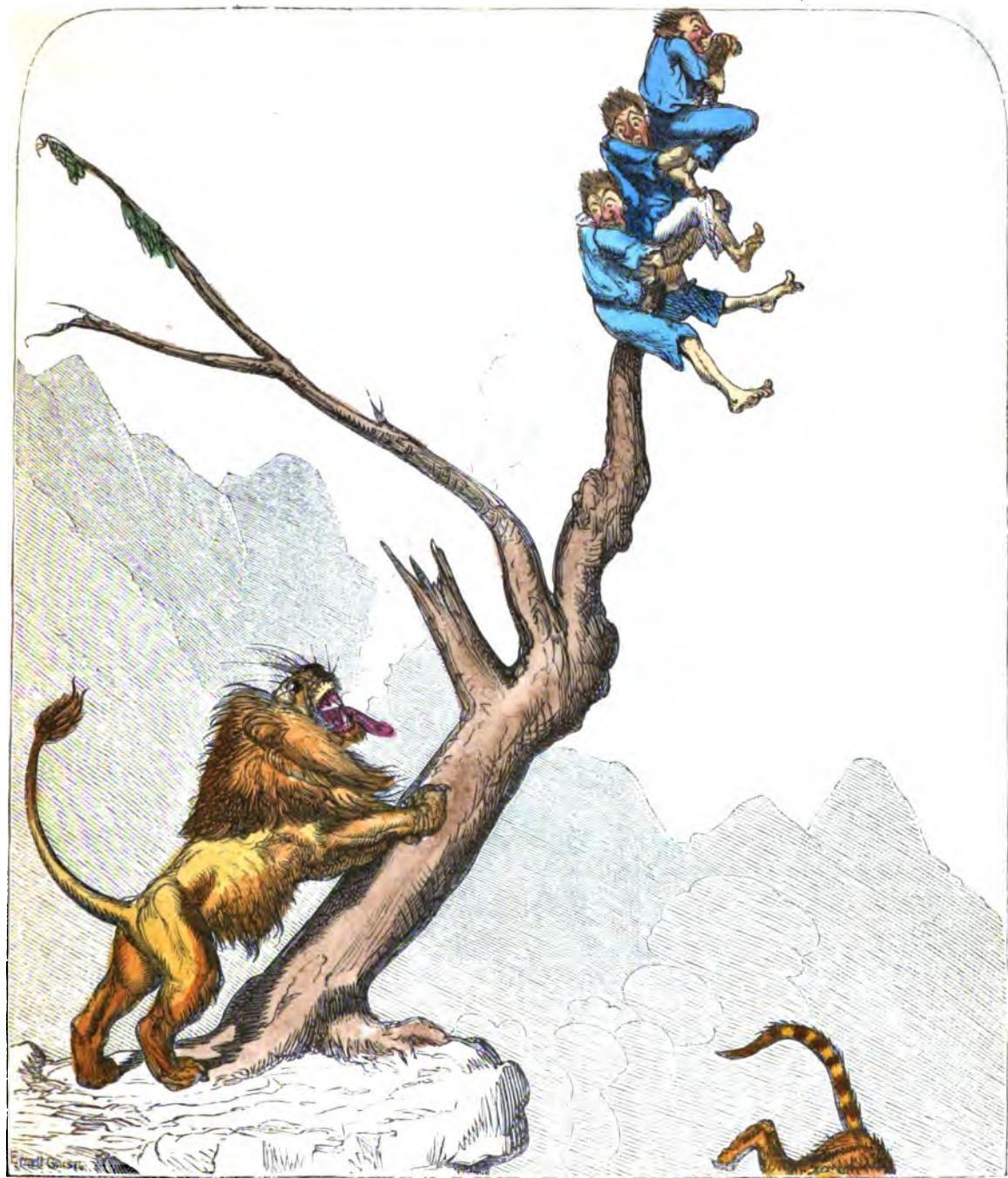
laid flat for a spring, uttering such frightful sounds as would have sent any other creature but a famished lion about his business at once.

“But the lion wasn’t scared ; he simply stood still, with his tongue out and his eyes twinkling as though wondering in his own mind what the dickens the tiger meant by such insolent behaviour. The next instant, however, hearing the sound of our chattering teeth, he gave a startled look upwards, and then shutting one of his glaring eyes, he looked at the tiger with the other, at the same time giving vent to a sort of whistle, as much as to say, ‘Now I see what your game is, old gentleman !’

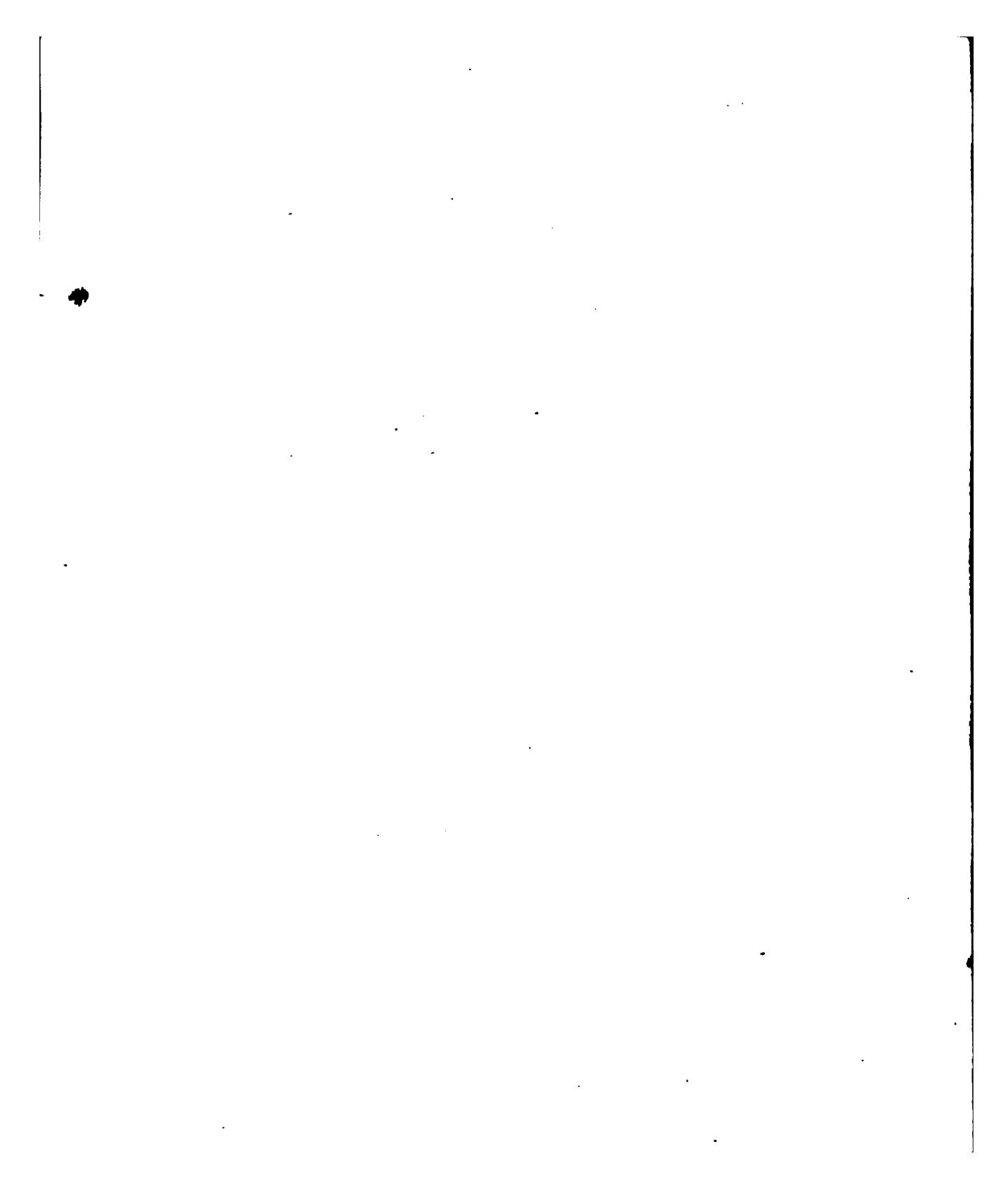
“The battle between them was terrific. The tiger, though the weaker animal of the two, was the more nimble, and evaded all the lion’s endeavours to break his back with his fore-paw, which, as everybody knows, he could have done with the greatest ease if he could only have got one fair spank at it. It *was* a fight ! At times they would be hid from our view as long as five minutes together, owing to the great cloud of fur and fluff torn from each other’s bodies, while the blood from their wounds poured down into the gulf with a noise like a waterfall. Our great hope was that they would either kill each other outright, or that, locked in each other’s vengeful embrace, biting and scratching, and blind from fury, they would both roll into the abyss, and there would be an end of ’em.

“No such luck. Suddenly there was a greater howling and roaring than had as yet happened, and a greater cloud of fluff and fur, and then there came a dead silence, and when the cloud had cleared away a bit all that was to be seen of the tiger was his hind-quarters and his tail projecting out of a crevice in the rock, and there stood the lion licking his lips and lashing his tail victoriously.

“I’ve heard many tales, and I dare say you have heard the same, gentlemen, about the generosity of the lion. It’s all a delusion ; he’s as bloodthirsty a beggar as ever the tiger is. What was his behaviour on the occasion I’m speaking of ? Wouldn’t you have thought that, having vanquished his enemy, he would have spared us ? Not he. He stood licking his lips for no longer than about a minute, when he turned his attention to his wounds, smelling ’em and counting ’em, as it were. Whether it was that the generous brute found that he was not so much hurt as he at first thought, and that he might safely tackle us three, or that he found he was more hurt than he at first thought, and turned savage with us as being the cause, it is impossible for us to say. Anyhow, he *did* turn savage against us, and glaring and mouthing at us, he sprang at the tree, and standing on his hind-legs, embraced it with his great fore-arms and shook it as though it had been a gooseberry-



SHOWING THE END OF THE TIGER, BUT NOT OF THE PERIL.



bush, all the time bullying us in his own language, and in a voice that brought our hearts into our mouths.

“ We didn’t need to know lion language to understand that what he said was that we had better come down before he shook us down. But we took the liberty of thinking differently. Of course he didn’t know it, but the men he had to deal with were British sailors—fellows who can climb like flies, and never fear falling from the most giddy height as long as there is holdfast for their eye-teeth and big toe-nails. Besides, it wasn’t as though we were ignorant of what that tree could stand, so the more he shook the tighter we clung, though, to tell the truth, it was tough work for me, who, as before mentioned, was the bottom man, for the limb was awfully slippery, and though I don’t say but what Jerry and Charley Phibbs bore down on me no heavier than they could, still they *did* bear on me so that I was painfully aware of sliding downwards an inch or so, and put to the shift of poking my legs straight out for fear they might dangle in the lion’s reach.

“ In this unpleasant position we remained until the shades of evening, the lion meanwhile shaking at the tree and pausing to bully us into submission in turn. As the twilight deepened his rage and impatience increased, while at the same rate our strength and spirits declined, well knowing that if the brute only shook long enough the tree must yield.

“ But we didn’t understand his nature. The daylight was against his ingenuity, and if it had remained daylight it is very likely that he would have gone on shaking the tree in the same stupid way; but the night was coming on, and with it awoke the tremenjus cunning nature of the beast. Suddenly he left off shaking the tree, and surveyed it with what we were pained and alarmed to perceive was a satisfied expression of countenance. Then he proceeded to show us that necessity has no objection to act the part of mother as regards invention to lions as well as human creatures. He felt at the surface of the slanting tree, and then he pawed his whiskers reflectively. Then he retired a few paces, and, to our great astonishment, proceeded to lick the surface of all his four feet until they were quite wet, and then he went a little farther, where the fine sand laid deepest, and trod his wet feet into it as hard as he could. A thrill of horror passed through us as we witnessed this act and penetrated the monster’s design. He meant climbing up the slanted trunk, *and had roughed his feet to prevent his slipping!*

“ Our suspicion was correct. With a diabolical leer in his flaming eyes he deliberately

approached our tree, and planting his fore-feet against it, held on, and then made good his foothold with the hind ones. He meant to have us ! it was all over with us ! After all our pains and labour we were to be plucked down one at a time and eaten in sight of our shipmates until not one of us was left ! I own we *did* give way then. We roared out our bitter grief in such heartrending terms that had the lion been half—ah, or a quarter—the generous brute he has the credit for being, he would have pitied and spared us.

“ Up he came, wheezing very hard with the exertion, but still making headway, until he planted his fore-feet on the first fork, and then he stopped a few moments for a rest. I was the first man he would seize. ‘ Good-bye, Joe ! ’ exclaimed my sorrowing shipmates ; ‘ if so be that he *should* get enough out of you to satisfy his appetite and give us a chance of escape, we will break the news tender to your poor old father and Jemima, your young woman, you may depend.’

“ But now comes one of the strangest parts of the whole narrative ; the strangest, because, sticking fast to my colours of telling nothing but the strictest truth, I can’t account for it in the same satisfactory manner as I believe I have accounted for several other seemingly wonderful things. I have told you of our awful position, and how that it seemed quite impossible for us ever to escape, and here you see us all alive and hearty, which aint a bad sort of proof that we *did* escape. How’s the question. If I used a peck of words over trying to explain how it would make it no clearer to you, so I won’t waste time in such a ridiculous manner. All I or any of us know about it is this : just when the lion had rested long enough and was planting his paw for another rise, we heard a great clatter of heavy feet as of a very large animal approaching at top speed, and the very next instant—as well as we could see, mind you, in the dusk of the evening—looking down, there we beheld the lion flying from off the tree, and hovering over that dreadful gulf, flattened out as though he had lain in a mangle all night, and another animal with a shiny black body, with no hair on it except on his tail, which in shape was like a shaving-brush, a tremenjus animal big as three horses clapped together, flashing past the tree and thundering into the fathomless pit too. There ! now you know as much as I know of it, as much as any of us knows of it, and I’d be werry glad to know what you make of it.”

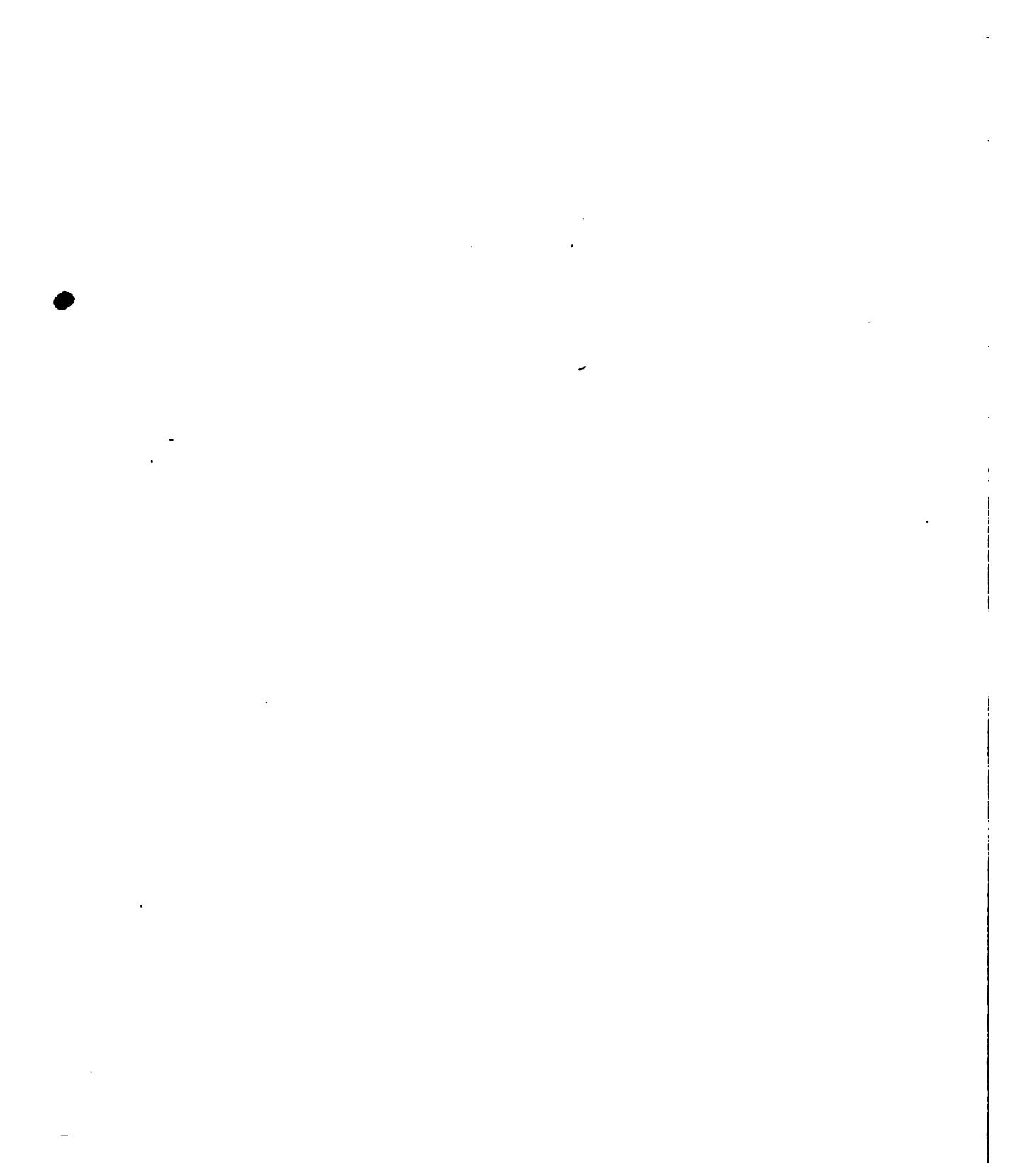
“ Make of what ? ” inquired monsieur the artist.

“ Why, of that gigantic and ferocious animal that saved us, ” replied Mr. Corker.

“ Can’t you give any further description of it than you have ? ”



RHINOCEROS TO THE RESCUE



Mr. Corker looked towards his shipmates inquiringly, but they shook their heads vaguely and looked up at the clouds.

“Did it have horns?” asked monsieur.

“*Did* it have horns, mates?” repeated Mr. Corker to his friends.

“Did it have a horn on its snout?” asked monsieur, inspired with a sudden idea.

“Of course it had,” replied Mr. Corker emphatically; “I always knew that there was some feature of that extraordinary animal that I had forgotten. It *did* have a horn on its snout; don’t you remember, Charley?”

“I should rather say that I did remember,” replied the mariner appealed to. “I never mentioned the circumstance before because I thought that I was the only one of us that remarked the peculiarity, and I was afraid that you and Jerry might suspect me of chucking the hatchet if I declared my opinion; now, however, that I’m free to speak out, I’m ready to give my opinion that it had *two* horns on its nose—a crooked one and a straight ‘un.”

“One horn, I think, Charley,” observed Mr. Corker, looking very hard at his fellow-adventurer.

“Possibly there were two,” spoke Monsieur G.

“Oh, then, I shouldn’t wonder if Charley was right,” replied Mr. Corker with a sigh of relief.

Meanwhile Monsieur G. had drawn a rapid picture of the scene as Joseph had described it, and in a moment submitted it for inspection.

“That, gentlemen, is *my* notion of how the affair happened, and, unless I’m much mistaken, that isn’t far from being a likeness of your mysterious animal.”

The three mariners gave a hasty glance at the picture, and identified the animal instantly.

“It was as I suspected,” observed the amiable artist; “it was a rhinoceros who effected your miraculous escape from the jaws of the lion.”

“Was it now?” exclaimed Mr. Corker with a grateful expression of countenance. “Shipmates, you hear what the gentleman says, it was a rhinoceros that helped us out of that mess! Shipmates! we should be no better than heathens if we didn’t drink to the health of the rhinoceros, wherever he may be!”

So saying, Mr. Corker solemnly raised the can and drank with a depth that showed how much his heart was in the toast, an example which his brother mariners were not slow to follow.

"And so there was an end to your interesting adventures on that island, eh?" remarked our artist, folding up his sketches.

"An end to 'em, cap'n! I wish that we could say so," replied Mr. Corker, shaking his head with profound meaning; "I wish even that we were able to say—with truth, mind you, I wouldn't give a brass farden to say what wasn't all true and *bone-a-friday*, as they say in foreign lingo—I wish we were able to say that the part of our adventures on that dreadful island I have already related to you was the worst part. What do *you* say, shipmates?"

Both Mr. Corker's shipmates turned up their eyes and heaved a doleful sigh, Mr. Humm accompanying his sigh with an expressive drumming on the now empty can—a sound that conjured up the beer-boy as if by magic.

"Yes," continued Mr. Corker, "it was only the north part of that island that we had as yet explored; the worst had yet to come. As I before observed, it was rapidly growing towards dark when our preserver, as well as our ferocious enemy, found a grave in the horrible gulf we had so long been hanging over, leaving the coast clear; and glad enough we were, after enduring our cramped position through so many hours, to descend and stretch our legs a bit.

"There was but one opinion amongst us, and that was, that the sooner we quitted so dreadful a spot the better it would be for us. We could not, however, resist remaining just a little while. We had not, as you will remember, tasted a morsel of food since the morning when we devoured the tiger's dinner, so that we were sharp enough set, you may depend. Tiger flesh isn't a very tempting meat, especially raw and with the hide on; but a hungry belly has no conscience, as you may have heard, gentlemen. There, as before mentioned, were the tiger's hind-quarters sticking up out of the narrow crevice in the rock just as the lion had left them. We had no knife or any other sort of cutting instrument, but, looking about, we found a couple of the tiger's own claws that had come off in the combat, and with these we contrived to skin one of the tiger's hams and remove all the flesh there was upon it, which, I should say, didn't amount to more than a pound and a-half, the poor creature was so awfully thin. We, of course, meant to carve the other ham; but after taking a mouthful of the first we came to the conclusion that that would be a mere waste of labour, as we already had more than enough to last us while it would keep fresh, a fair hour's chewing being the least that each bite would take before it was brought into a fit state for swallowing.

“ By the time we had finished our hasty meal it was night ; but, to our great delight, instead of being pitchy dark as it was last night, the moon rose brilliantly, so that there was no reason why we should delay so much as an hour in setting off on our journey. So off we set at about nine o’clock or a quarter past as nigh as may be guessed.

“ We travelled at a brisk pace all the night through, but it was not until the moon had set and the sun rose that we perceived any difference in the character of the country, or made any sort of discovery that would lead us to imagine that it was in any way different from that part of it where we had encountered so many dangers. At last, however, and when the sun was high in the heavens, and when we were regularly dead beat, while crossing a thicket we came upon something that at once brought us to a standstill. It was a trap set for catching some sort of animal—a simple affair enough, and composed of the teeth of the sword-fish, set in green timber, and worked by whalebone springs ; but what was *not* simple, what, as you may easily understand, to men in our condition was particularly interesting, was the fact that the trap was baited with part of a human hand and arm !

“ Here indeed was enough to startle us. Not only was it evident that we had arrived at an inhabited part of the island, but, if appearances went for anything, the inhabitants were cannibals ! Argeyng from common sense, there could be no doubt about it. In the first place it was certain that human flesh was held in no respect by them ; and in the next it was equally clear that they saw nothing wrong in setting it out to be eat by the game they expected to catch and eat too. We looked at each other with tears in our eyes ; no one spoke, but what we all thought was that we had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire, and no mistake.

“ What was to be done ? Even had we been in good condition for travelling, to have retraced our steps to that part from whence we came would have been indeed a sorry prospect, but this was impossible ; we had eaten very little food during the last eight-and-forty hours, and our long march had so completely baked us, that we couldn’t have walked another half-mile to save our lives. There was nothing left but to remain where we were, hoping that things might not turn out so terrible as they promised ; and with that resolution we turned away from the loathsome bait in the trap, and took a seat in the shade of a thornbush.

“ We were not kept long in suspense. Before we had been seated ten minutes we heard a stealthily-approaching footstep, which we at first supposed to be that of some

animal lured towards the trap ; but peeping cautiously in that direction, we discovered that it was not a four-footed beast, but a human savage, who had come, we supposed, to see if there was anything caught. He was a very small savage—quite a child, in fact—but a more hideous object it is impossible to imagine. With the exception of a wisp of filthy red rag hung round his loins, and a bone skewer run through the gristle of his nose, he was entirely naked. The most remarkable part about him, however, was his hair, or, more properly speaking, wool ; it was like a great black mop, and his body being not more than about three times the stoutness of a mop-stick, altogether he presented rather a singular appearance.

“ Like all savages, his hearing was remarkably quick, and though we scarcely breathed, and sat as still as mice, he presently turned his beady eyes towards us, and the next instant uttered a loud and unearthly yell, and ran off at the top of his speed.

“ We knew what *that* meant : he had gone to tell his relations what he had seen, and presently we should have them turning out against us in a body ; and what our fate would be then there could not be the shadow of a doubt.

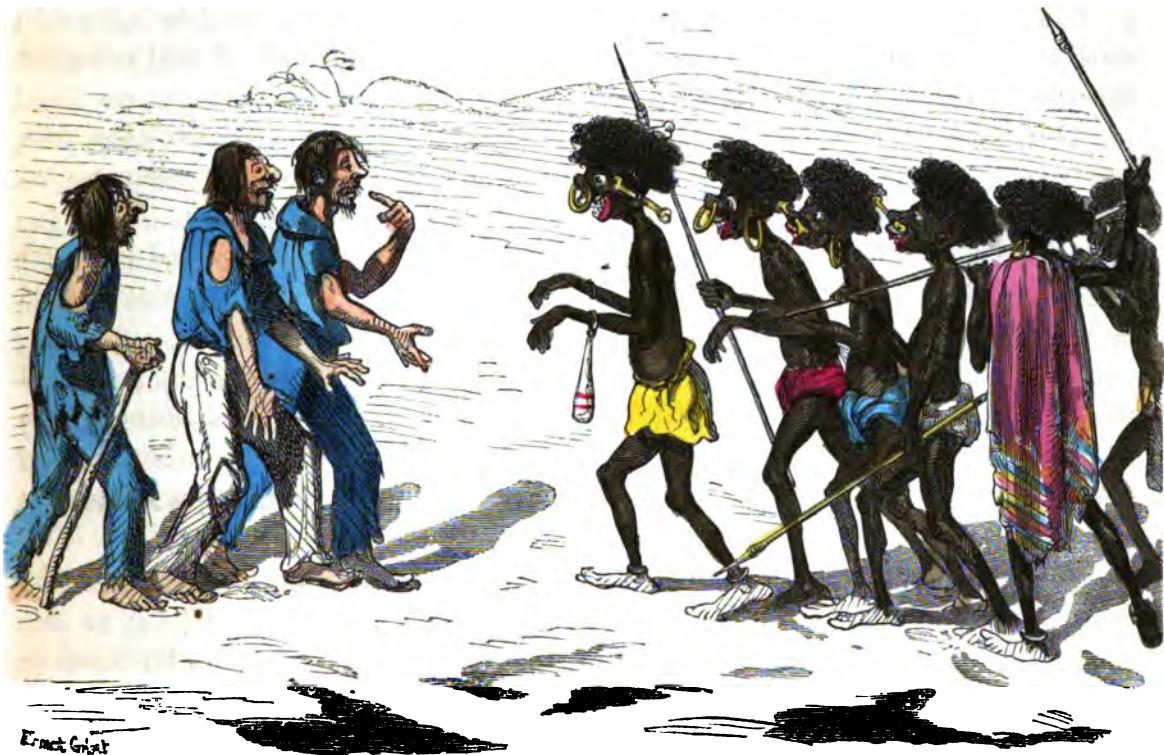
“ When it came to this I thought it best to make a move. ‘ Shipmates,’ said I, ‘ I think we may pretty safely reckon that our course is run ; as starved and unarmed men we cannot hope to cope against a host of savages such as I expect will bear down on us instantly. But what we may do is to die like men and Britons. Maybe this is the first time these savages have seen a Briton. Let us show them the sort of stuff he is made of. The path that young savage took is the path the whole lot of ‘em will come ; let us take that path and go out to meet ‘em, singing ‘ Rule Britannia.’ ”

“ So we did. Though cast away, and put quite the t’other side of hope, we were Englishmen, and we couldn’t forget the dear old country ; and though, on account of the dryness of our throats, the moosic was not quite so meller, perhaps, as it might have been, I venture to say that that song was never sung heartier or with more real feeling than we sang it.

“ We were not allowed to get beyond the second verse, howsoever. When we had got so far the air was suddenly filled with the most awful whoops and shrieks, and bounding from behind a bush right in our path appeared the savages we were expecting. Now, I’ve read about savages, and I’ve heard about ‘em, and I’ve been to see ‘em at the Egyptian Hall ; but, Lor’ bless you, they no more came up to the savages on that island than a militiaman comes up to a commander-in-chief. A more hideous, horrible—there,

I'm blowed if I can find words to describe 'em. P'raps you'll be good enough to lend me your pencil and a bit of paper, Mr. Picture-maker. I aint much of a fist at drawing, but p'raps I might be able to give you a sort of rough idea as to what them savages were like."

And with a rapidity that undoubtedly showed how deep was the impression of the



THE THREE ANCIENT MARINERS IMPLORÉ THE CHARITY OF THE NATIVES.

savages' appearance on the mind of Mr. Corker, that veteran roughly sketched the black figures in the accompanying picture.

"The one you see in front," continued Mr. Corker, "the one with the shank-bones through his ears, seemed to be the leader of the party; and finding that they did not instantly fall on us, I took heart, and signed to this fellow that we should be very much obliged if they would get us something to eat and drink; but to my appeal the ruffian

replied by a mocking laugh, and, making a spring at me, seized me by the hair, and commenced dragging me along, while at the same instant others of the savage party seized Jerry and Charley Phibbs in the same manner, and we were marched off at a sharp trot, those who were not engaged in hauling us bringing up the rear, and pricking us behind with their fish-bone spears whenever we stumbled or our tired legs failed us in the least.

“ In this ignominious manner we were dragged over something more than half-a-mile, until we came in sight of a long low hut like a great pigsty, being built of mud as regards the walls, and thatched with a sort of straw. To our astonishment, however, we found that the building was not a pigsty, but the residence of the king of the savage tribe, who, accompanied by his son the prince, hurried out of the palace to see us. Only that his majesty was rather more savage-looking, there was no difference in his appearance from his subjects’, except in one particular—he wore a snuff-coloured English coat, out at the elbows and greasy as a dishclout, but once fashionable; while the prince wore an English-made chimney-pot hat, once white, but now very few shades lighter than the disgusting mop of hair it was perched atop of. It was impossible to view this sight without melancholy thoughts springing up within you. Where now was the Englishman—some unlucky missionary, no doubt—to whom that snuff-coloured coat and white hat once belonged? Looking from the coat to the king’s teeth, filed to the sharpness of needles, we shuddered as we there read the answer.

“ At first sight of us the king was evidently filled with great glee, and rubbed his hands and gnashed his spiky teeth in a manner that was frightful to behold; but as soon as he laid hands on us—which he did exactly as you may see a butcher lay his hands on an ox at Smithfield-market, punching our ribs and feeling our breadth at the small of the back—his countenance changed for the worse, and he shook his head dismally. While he was examining us the prince was busy rubbing up the edge of an old knife on a stone, singing away as jolly as a sandboy; but when his papa called him and whispered something into his ear, he looked at us as savage as though he could eat us, and, casting the knife from him, burst into a flood of tears, and buried his face in a palm-leaf which he carried in his white hat, and used, I imagine, instead of a handkerchief.

“ After comforting his little boy, the king turned to his attendants and gave them some directions, whereon we were straightway led to a sort of yard, surrounded by high palings,

at the rear of the palace, and a quantity of the softest of grass being piled in the shade, we were invited to sit down on it, and scarcely had we seated ourselves when two of the savages made their appearance, bearing between them a measure made out of baked clay, and holding, I should guess, about a gallon and a-half, and filled with new milk, which they set down before us and made signs that we were to drink it, an invitation, as you may depend, we were not long availing ourselves of. It was delicious milk—thicker than



THEY ARE FATTENED FOR KILLING.

cow's milk and much sweeter; indeed, it was more like weak cream and honey than anything else.

“What this sudden turn in the aspect of affairs meant we were at a loss to make out. Were we, after all, mistaken as to the character of the savages, and were they, after all, jolly, hospitable fellows? True, their manner of introducing us to their king was rather rough, but, for all we knew, it might be a mark of ceremony and respect to drag a foreigner

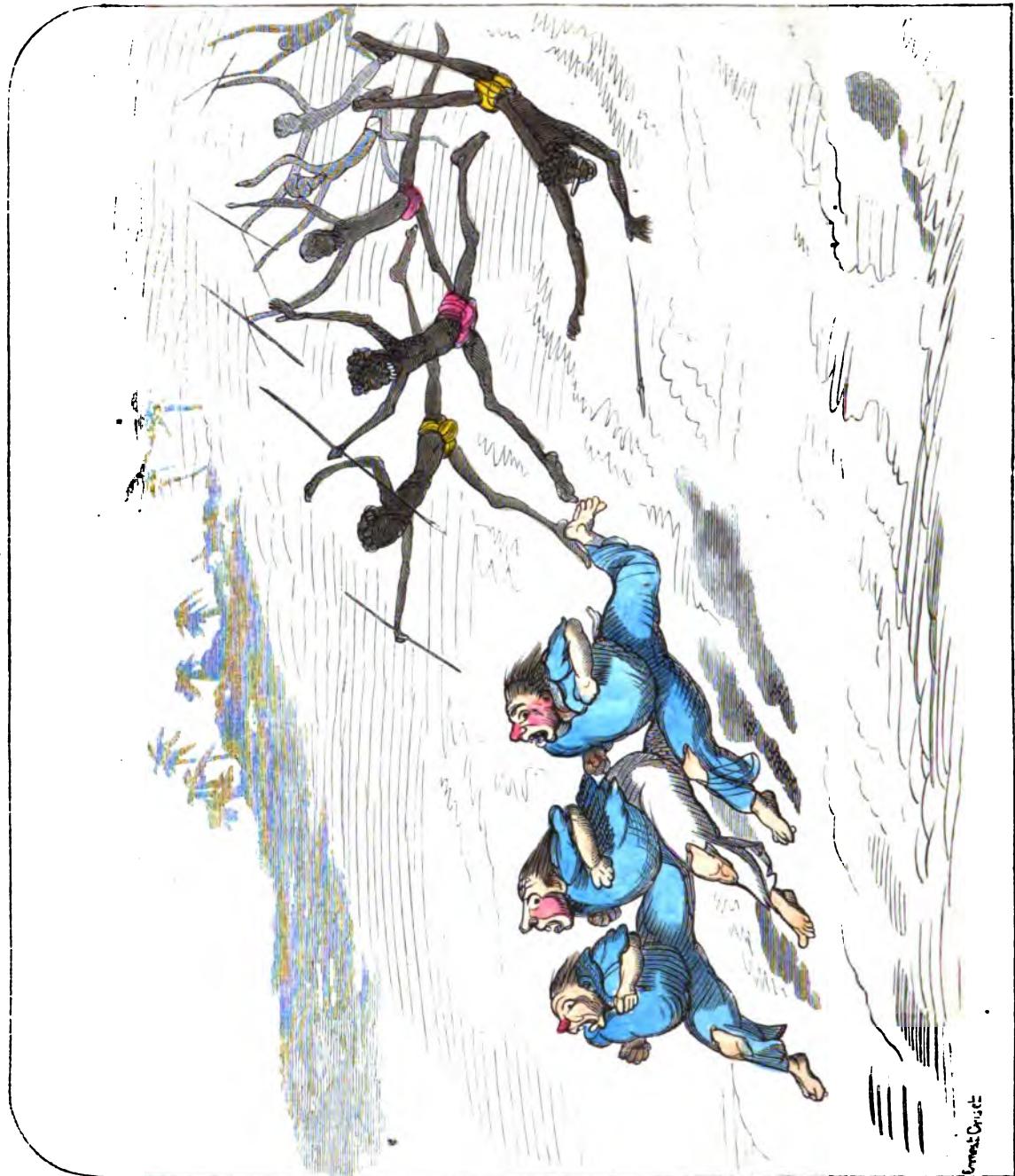
along by the hair of his head. But we had hardly got further than this with our whispered speculations when the same savages who had brought the milk again appeared, this time staggering under what seemed a side of beef, and this they also laid down, and gave us to understand that it was for our eating. It was plain now that we had done the poor creatures injustice, so, thanking the honest fellows who had brought us the meat, we pitched into it as only those who have been without food a day and a night can. It wasn't raw meat, and it wasn't what might be called cooked, but it was very good, and I won't tempt anybody to disbelieve me by telling 'em the awful lot we eat of it. In short, we ate until we fell back on our hay couch and went fast asleep.

"We were very tired, and we slept through the entire day; indeed, I think we should have slept through the entire night too, had not the savages roused us just as it was growing dark, and once more the measure was filled with milk and the cold meat left from the morning was placed before us. Nothing could be jollier. Nothing to do but to eat, and drink, and sleep! True, every day the king paid us a visit and looked on while we took our meals, but he was always very affable, and would even offer us tit-bits with his own royal hands, tempting us to eat when we were quite full.

"Had we been his dearest friends—his blood relations even—he couldn't have exhibited greater solicitude for our welfare. If we happened to doze after dinner, when we awoke we found a couple of niggers with palm-leaf fans gently stirring the air to keep us cool and protect us from the attacks of flies, which in them parts arrive at a tremenjus size, and sting like the pricking of a bradawl. Oftentimes, when we thought ourselves unobserved, and sat in the shade discoursing of our good luck, we would suddenly discover the face of the king peering through a chink of the palings, with his mouth ajar and his spiky teeth glistening, and his eyes full of delight to see how comfortable we were.

"On the third day Jerry Humm had a bilious attack on account of the richness of his living, and then you should have seen the pretty fuss there was! Not for a single moment would the king leave Jerry's side; he made him pills with his own hands, and brought his chief squaw to nurse him. Naturally Jerry fell away a bit, and his majesty couldn't have grieved more if it had been his own mother. You would have thought that it was he that was losing flesh instead of Jerry, had you seen the melancholy way of his shaking his head when he poked him about the ribs with his finger and found him more yielding-like than he was in the morning. I think he had a suspicion that there was foul play somewhere, for directly after Jerry was taken queer our waiters were changed; and happening





to look towards the wood, we saw the three poor fellows who had hitherto attended us and brought us our victuals, hanging all of a row on the branch of a banyan.

“However, Jerry got all right again, and at the expiration of something over a week, the king sent for us one morning into the hut and bade us strip off our clothes. The good feeding and that rich milk had improved our condition wonderfully, so that even Jerry Humm, nat’rally of a thin and pining disposition, must have increased in weight five stone at the very least. When we had done as the king directed, he examined us just as he had done when he first saw us, pinching and poking us, and seemingly in a difficulty about making up his mind; at last he made it up, and, taking a bit of red ochre out of his pocket, he made a cross with it on Charley Phibbs’s back, and then dismissed us to the straw-yard.

“Then, sudden as a flash of lightning, the truth came into our minds—*we were being fattened for killing!* There could not be a doubt that it was to that diabolical end that we had been so well treated, and poor Charley Phibbs, who had taken kinder to his food than we had, was marked as the first victim!

“We were frantic with rage and bitter disappointment, the more so because we were now completely at the mercy of the monsters, for even though we saw a chance of getting away, we were too fat to take advantage of it.

“So we thought; but, as I have had occasion to remark more than once in the course of this truthful story, we don’t know what we can do till we try, and, thanks to that sweet little chirrup sitting up aloft as you may have heard tell of, gentlemen, we *were* allowed another chance. In the midst of our grief we heard a sound that caused us to leap to our feet with delight. It was the sound of a ship’s gun! In an instant I scrambled to the top of the palings that inclosed our yard, and so got a view of the sea, and, while grateful tears streamed from my eyes, there I beheld a British ship lying about half-a-mile off, and a British boat, manned and making for the shore.

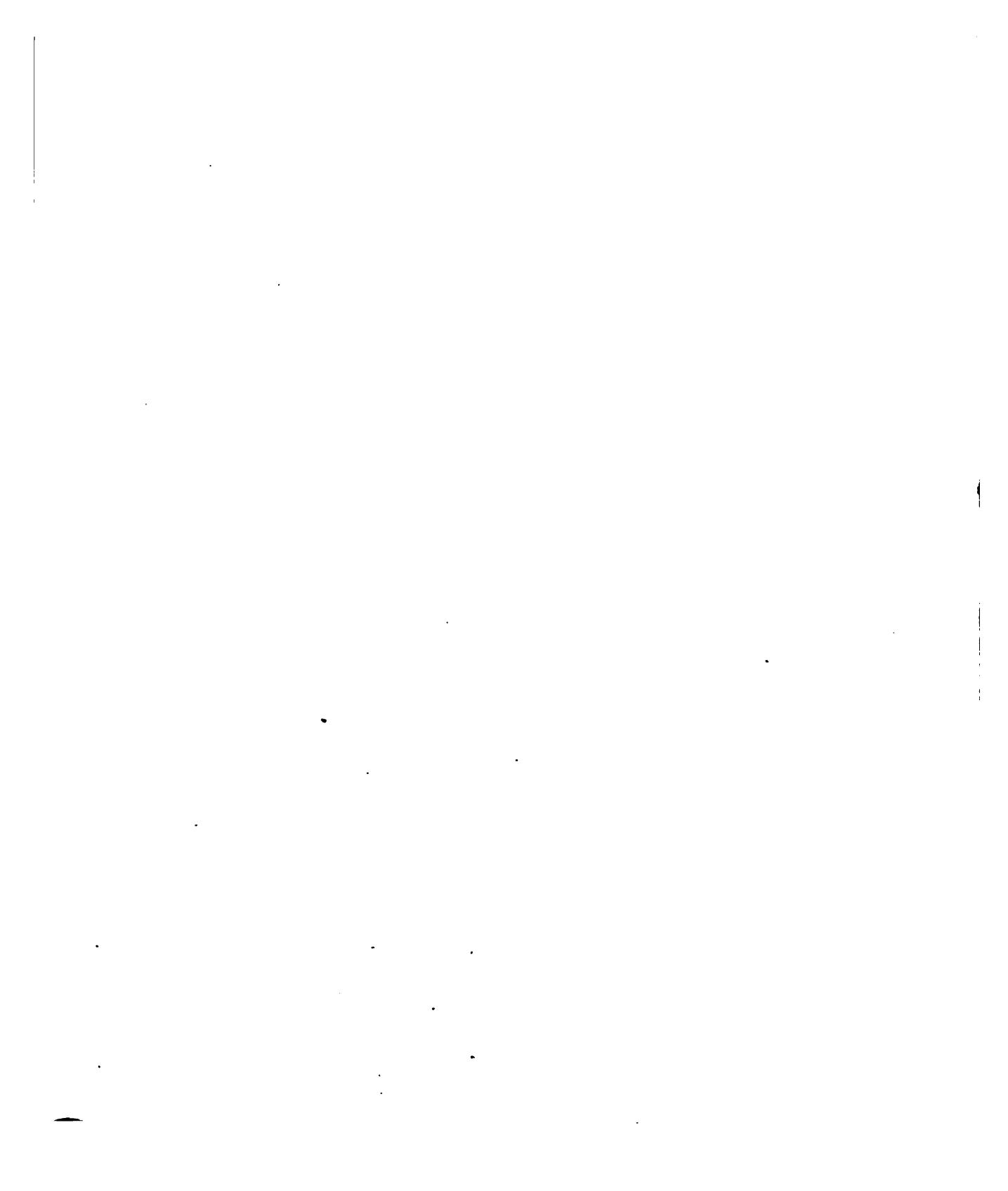
“It was now or never. In as few words as possible I explained the condition of affairs to my shipmates, and we instantly made up our minds to action. Once more, being the nimblest of the three, I climbed to the top of the palings and hauled up Charley and Jerry, and in another minute we were down the other side and making for the beach, which was about a mile distant, as hard as ever we could; but before we had got a hundred yards we heard a horrible yell behind us, and, looking in that direction, there we saw at least a dozen of the savages, with their spears in their hands, coming after us at a tremenjus rate. For

an instant we thought we were lost, but it happened that the boat's crew heard the yell the savages had raised, and, turning their eyes in our direction, at once saw how matters stood, and encouraged us with a British cheer while they laid on their oars with a will. This put fresh life in us, and, returning the cheer, we skimmed down the hill like grasshoppers, and if you will once more lend me your pencil, cap'n, I will wind up by giving you a notion of what the result was."



THE WOULD-BE BITERS BITTEN.

BRASS, BROTHERS, OF BRISTOL:
THEIR TRAVELS AND PERILS.



BRASS, BROTHERS, OF BRISTOL: THEIR TRAVELS AND PERILS.

DIVISION I.

To see Mr. Corker's solitary eye twinkle as it gazed on the shining sovereign which, as he brought his astonishing and spirit-moving narrative to a close, we pressed on his acceptance (with an intimation that Messrs. Phibbs and Humm were each to receive a share of it), was indeed a treat. The grateful light in the overjoyed optic lit up his bronzed and puckered countenance in a manner that was beautiful to behold; the child-like innocence with which he placed the coin between his aged teeth and bit it to test its genuineness, the boyish glee with which he span it in the air and caught it again when he found that it stood the test, the old-fashioned simplicity of his spitting on the money "for luck" as he slipped it into his capacious waistcoat-pocket, were each and all as touching as they were gratifying to witness.

"Lord bless your honours!" exclaimed he as we took our leave of him and his companions, "it's a pity for the likes of us that there aint a few more of the likes of *you* in the world—not, mind ye, on account of money, which, as everybody knows, is nothing but dross and the root of all evil, but because of the nice sort of feeling it gives us to find that there are still *some* genelmen left as are willing to reckonize those principles which were laid down in me and my shipmates in early life, and which nothing shall ever tempt us to sweerve from. Whenever you happen to be coming again this way and like to give them there principles of ours another trial, you'll find 'em ready and willing at your service; and as for yarns of adventure, Lor' love your honours' eyes, figures won't reckon up the number we three have been consarned in. You might count 'em by pecks, as the saying is."

So enticed, monsieur the artist and myself *did* happen to go that way again, but, we regret to state, with no very satisfactory result. Truly Mr. Corker had, as he said he had, "pecks" of adventure in store, but unluckily there existed so strong a family likeness

between the specimens he produced and those he at first related to us as to give rise to the unpleasant suspicion that the date of their birth was identical. Under such circumstances our correspondence with the three ancient mariners slackened, and finally, as we imagined, ceased entirely.

In this, however, we were mistaken. For some reason or another we had given Mr. Corker our address, and months after our last Greenwich interview—in the depth of winter, indeed—while looking out at the window and watching the fast-falling snow, two figures halted at our gate. They were odd figures in many respects, one being so short that, as he peered over the gate-top to make sure that he was right as regarded the number on the street-door, nothing beneath the three-cornered hat was visible but a single eye and a pimply and frost-bitten nose, and an iron hook that was hitched over the edge of the ironwork to save its owner from slipping off the icy step. As for his companion, he was a tall man—so tall that the three-cornered hat before mentioned reached no higher than the third buttonhole of the tightly-buttoned thin and shabby black coat that enveloped the lank, long body of its hungry-looking wearer. His limp black hat was pulled well down to his ears, where its brim was met by the edge of the upturned coat-collar; he wore spectacles, his nose was of the colour of a blighted beet, and he blew dismally and for warmth's sake at the tips of his fingers that peeped out at the ends of his old worsted gloves.

“Who can it be?” said I.

“The waits, I should say,” replied monsieur the artist; “that man so long and narrow is he of the flute. The man of the flute is always long and narrow.”

“But the little man with the iron hand, he cannot be a wait; they are beggars, I suppose; and yet—come in.”

“If you please, sir, a person of the name of Corker has called, and says would you see him on important business.”

“It is Corker of Greenwich,” remarked monsieur the artist, taking another peep out at the window, where was to be seen that wooden-legged veteran stumping up the snowy pathway arm-in-arm with his long friend. As he caught sight of monsieur's good-humoured face, he hitched up the three-cornered hat with his hook and bowed respectfully. “Show them up by all means,” observed monsieur the artist.

After this we naturally expected to see Mr. Corker and his mysterious companion make an appearance, but to our astonishment Mr. Corker alone entered. He closed the door

softly behind him, and advancing into the room with his hat in his hand, addressed us in a whisper.

“He’s down-stairs, yer honours. I took the liberty of leaving him standing on the mat while I came up and opened the business for him.”

“But who is he, Mr. Corker? What’s his business and yours? Why do you bring him here?”

“Why? why because he’s a wonder, genelmen!” replied Mr. Corker, placing his hook against the side of his frost-bitten nose and winking the knowingest of winks—“because he’s been through adventures what’ll make your hair stand on end; that’s why I’ve brought him here. My falling in with him was quite promiscuous. You p’raps don’t happen to know the ‘Ship Aground’ at Deptford? That’s where I was taking a glass last night, and in he comes. ‘Matey,’ says he, ‘will you give a pipe of bacca to an unfortunate fellow, who ought to be a-riding in his carriage if he had his rights?’ ‘What d’ye mean?’ says I. ‘If I was as big as you, I’d like to see the one that would do me out of *my* rights.’ ‘It aint one that is doing it, shipmate, it’s the whole nation,’ ses he, helping himself from my bacca-box. Well, d’ye see, when he took to talkin’ like that, I set him down as one of those poor fellows that go cranky about property that they’ve had a dream about, and so I goes on smoking and takes no further notice; but presently he breaks out again. ‘Yes,’ ses he, ‘there’s many a man has been put in the British Museum that hasn’t been through a quarter that I have.’ ‘In what line, shipmate, may I ask?’ ses I. ‘Travels and adventures,’ replied he. ‘Indeed!’ ses I, ‘I’m something in that way myself. In what part, now, might you have travelled and adventured?’ ‘Parts where you’ve never been, nor any other man, if I aint very much mistaken,’ replied he, shaking his head in a way that showed at once that there was something in it; ‘pray do you know anything about the Great Wigglewaggle Desert in Central Africa?’ ‘That’s one of the very few parts I never visited; whereabouts is it?’ ses I. ‘Due north,’ ses he; ‘bounded on the left by the Crammagoose Mountains, and on the right by the River Benda; in fact, you must go over the Benda to reach the Great Wigglewaggle.’ ‘Well, and what do you see when you get there?’ I asked. Well, genelmen, he told me what was there to be seen, and what was there to be met and encountered, and what he had there seen, and heard, and met, and encountered—he and his brother Eli. Talk about *our* adventures! why, a barber’s ‘prentice never a mile from Ratcliff has seen as many, compared with theirs! When I say that he told me about ‘em, I mean that he told me *something* about ‘em, but he hadn’t got

half-way when all of a sudden I thought to myself, 'I know who would like to hear what I'm a-hearing! If it was worth while the genelmen I mean to tip the han'some sum of a sovereign for that simple little story Charley Phibbs and I told 'em, goodness knows what they'd tip to hear this chap.' So I pulled him up short. 'Shipmate,' ses I, 'will you give me your word as a traveller and an adventurer that you aint telling crammers?' He seemed a little hurt at the question at first. 'What call have you got to doubt me?' ses he. 'Beg your pardon, matey,' ses I, 'the call aint with me, but it happens as how I know two genelmen—real genelmen, mind you—who might stump up something more than a pipe of bacca to hear these extryornary stories of yours if so be as they are all straightfor'ard and genuine; but hark ye, matey,' ses I, 'before you makes up your mind to go with me to the genelmen I'm alluding to, understand me rightly that they're about the wide-awakest genelmen you ever clapped eyes on. You might come it over a ignorant man like what I am, but they'd be down on you like a hundred of bricks at the very fust word of gammon that came out of your mouth.' With that he starts up. 'I'm ready,' ses he; 'all that I've told you, and a precious sight more, is genuwine as imported, I'll warrant.' 'Very good,' ses I; 'then meet me in the morning, and I'll take you to the genelmen straight.' And so I have brought him, your honours, and if I've done wrong in taking the liberty, and you'll excuse it, why there's no harm done, and if you'll just let us take a warm in the kitchen, we'll toddle off again, werry sorry for intruding."

As good fortune would have it, it happened on this identical winter's morning that I had resolved to put in practice my oft-repeated promise to monsieur the artist to initiate him in the mysteries of the manufacture of that favourite English beverage, egg-flip. The brew was just completed as Mr. Corker put his nose over our gate, and by this time it had grown just cool enough for comfortable drinking. So, by way of answer to the old mariner's long-winded speech, I poured him out a tumblerful of the fragrant and comforting liquor, while my tender-hearted friend went to the stair-head and called to the gaunt traveller and adventurer to come up immediately.

He had very long legs, and the aroma of the flip probably reaching his nostrils at the same instant as the cordial invitation of monsieur the artist reached his ears, he made such use of them that, although the flight was fifteen stairs deep, we heard but three footfalls and then he stood in the doorway. He had by this time turned down the collar of his coat and removed the battered old black hat from his head, and the warmth of the passage having thawed his features somewhat, his appearance was much improved since we at first

caught a glimpse of him. Nevertheless, he was by no means a cheerful-looking person. His face was the face of a man familiar with winds of every variety, his cheeks were pinched and drawn in, his cheek-bones prominent, and his eyes deep-set and grey, and restless as those of a jackdaw. He licked his thin lips as he sniffed the egg-flip, and heaved a sigh that threatened to burst away the tightly-strained button that secured his threadbare coat at the throat part—a calamity he was anxious to avoid, judging from the eagerness with which he raised his hand to make sure that all was still secure. We placed a chair for him by the fire, and administered to him a dose out of the tumbler such as his friend had already partaken of. The effect was magical. His beetroot-coloured nose lost its withered aspect, his thin cheeks looked plumper, and satisfaction and calm visited his eyes. Once more he licked his lips, but this time with the deliberation of a cat that has caught and devoured a mouse, and drawing his other glove from his great bony left hand, folded them together, and with a business air placed them in his hat, which he had stowed out of harm's way underneath his chair.

“Have you informed the gentlemen as to the——?”

“I’ve told ‘em all about it as far as I know,” interrupted Mr. Corker.

“Thank you,” observed the tall, thin stranger, inclining his head gratefully towards Mr. Corker, and speaking in a sadly affable voice; “then there is no impediment to my——?”

“Firing away—not the least,” once more broke in the rough-mannered mariner; “the days are not so long as they are in the summer time, my friend, so the sooner you begin the quicker you’ll find yourself at t’other end.”

“We are quite prepared to listen to the interesting story of your adventures,” said we.

“Thank you kindly, gentlemen,” spoke the polite stranger, and, without further preface, began—

“Since it is only desirable that I should tell you the story of my adventures,” said he, “it will be unnecessary for me to relate my previous history, and what induced us—that is to say, your humble servant Goliah Brass and my brother Eli—to embark on a hunting and sketching tour in the wilds of Central Africa.”

“Sketching and hunting, worthy sir?” observed monsieur the picture-maker, hastily rising from his chair and gazing on the stranger with fraternal interest. “Pray may I inquire are you the hunter or——?”

"I am the artist," replied the lean one, on whom the emotion displayed by his interrogator had not been lost; "yes, gentlemen," continued he, as with the knuckle of his thumb he hastily dashed away a sorrowful tear that had risen to his eyes, "I am the artist! You see before you the not unfrequent example of a man endowed with genius without luck—a more unfortunate possession than which it is indeed hard to imagine. In me you behold a man whose lot it has been to paint pictures—pictures, as, with your permission, I shall presently have the opportunity of convincing you" (here he slapped that part of his buttoned-up coat where the breast-pocket is ordinarily situate), "of no common sort, both as regards design and execution—under the most painful and unheard-of circumstances—pictures with a tale, a romance of the most thrilling interest attached to each of them, independent of their merit *as* pictures. And yet what is my reward? True, I am permitted to pursue the avocation in which my soul delights, but how? where? With coloured chalks on the cold pavement! Portraying that mackerel the taste of which my poverty denies me, inscribing on the senseless flag that luscious cushion of bacon for a rasher of which in reality my neglected belly is yearning!"

And as he concluded this sorrowful and affecting outburst, the poor fellow covered his face and wept in his dirty cotton pocket-handkerchief, while the tender-hearted monsieur my friend hovered over him, consolingly entreating him to take heart and a little more egg-flip. It was not, however, until he had emptied another tumbler, and Mr. Corker had given vent to several admonitory growls, that the unlucky artist-traveller could bring himself to proceed.

"Let me plunge at once into the thick of those marvellous adventures I have hinted at," said he, "that I may therein forget the cruel present. Let me skip everything until that day when my brother Eli and myself, young and hopeful, set sail from our native Bristol, and, after a prosperous voyage, gay as two larks, stepped out of the African coaster Crinkum-crankum, and found ourselves on a foreign and inhospitable shore, he with his gun and hunting-knife and enough ammunition and provision in a bundle to last him a fortnight, and I, whose aims were of a peaceful sort, with nothing but a few brushes, a box of paints, and a few yards of canvas, a clasp-knife, a loaf, and a small Dutch cheese. Our bundles were separate, and for this reason: our roads were different. Eli was a hunter. He had read many books, and he had made the acquaintance of several beast-stuffers and ivory-turners in the neighbourhood of our paternal abode, and he had formed the stern determination to seek his fortune in both these branches—to chase the lion, the tiger, or any other animal

he might fall in with, for the sake of its hide; to track the elephant, the hippopotamus, and the rhinoceros to their various lairs, and pluck the ivory treasures from their mighty jaws. In one pocket of his shooting-coat he carried a small handsaw for the purpose of sawing off their tusks, and a strong pair of pincers for the extraction of their smaller teeth.

“ Although, before we started from home, and coming along on the voyage, we were perfectly agreed that our paths must be different, when it came to the last moment, and we arrived at a fork in the road and a finger-post, on which was inscribed in African (of which language my brother Eli was a perfect master), ‘ This way to the Great Wigglewaggle Desert, third turning to the left, and cross over the Benda; ’ and on the other side of the post, ‘ The nearest way to Gnashanripem,’ tears stood in both our eyes—in all four of ‘em I may say—for at that spot we were bound to part. It was a painful moment, and only that we were both filled with delight at the near prospect of the realisation of our dearest wishes, I dare say that our leave-taking would have been considerably prolonged. As it was, we made it as short as possible. Eli had taken the precaution to fill his flask with home-made rum at the last African town we passed through, and, grasping hands, we each took a pull at it.

“ ‘ Farewell, Goliah,’ said he, ‘ I wish you luck. May you discover that magnificent scenery for which the Great Wigglewaggle is so famous! May I find you at the appointed spot at the appointed time, with those many yards of canvas, now so brown and barren, blooming with the flowers of the forest—the aleycopayneano, the topheeoverton, the brandiborus, and all those other sweet exotic plants that will strew your path! May you live, Goliah, to see ‘em all framed and placed in high places in the National Gallery, while you recline at your ease viewing of ‘em, on that thousand a year a grateful country makes you a present of! ’

“ ‘ Good-bye, Eli,’ said I; ‘ may you fall in with tigers and elephants, and lions and wolves, to your heart’s content! But pray be careful, dear Eli, when you fall in with ‘em, how they fall out with *you*. May you shoot ‘em in droves and in hundreds, and strip ‘em and leave ‘em toothless! May you have better luck even than the greatest of modern hunters! though that can hardly be expected, since he carried a very long bow indeed as well as a rifle. May you return rich in hides as a Bermondsey fellmonger, and gather ivory, enough to stuff out each hide to its natural shape! ’

“ And with such mutual good wishes we left each other, on the understanding that that very day twelvemonth we were, if alive, to meet again on the steamboat-pier at Fernando

Po. Little did we dream in how much less a time we should encounter each other, and under what wonderful circumstances! However, that's getting before my story.

“The Great Wigglewaggle was, as I knew, distant several miles, though I didn't know exactly how many, nor did I care particularly, for it was lovely weather, and it wasn't as though I was in any sort of hurry. I walked on for a few hours (without meeting a single soul except an old Kaffir woman, with a skin bag full of milk on her back, a drink of which she gave me in exchange for a bit of yellow ochre, which, to my great surprise, she no sooner got hold of than she ate it and smacked her lips), when I sat down under a hedge and partook of some bread and cheese, quenching my thirst at one of those sparkling streams which always abound in the neighbourhood of deserts. Then I walked on again till dusk, and had my supper, and made myself comfortable under a thorn-bush for the night.

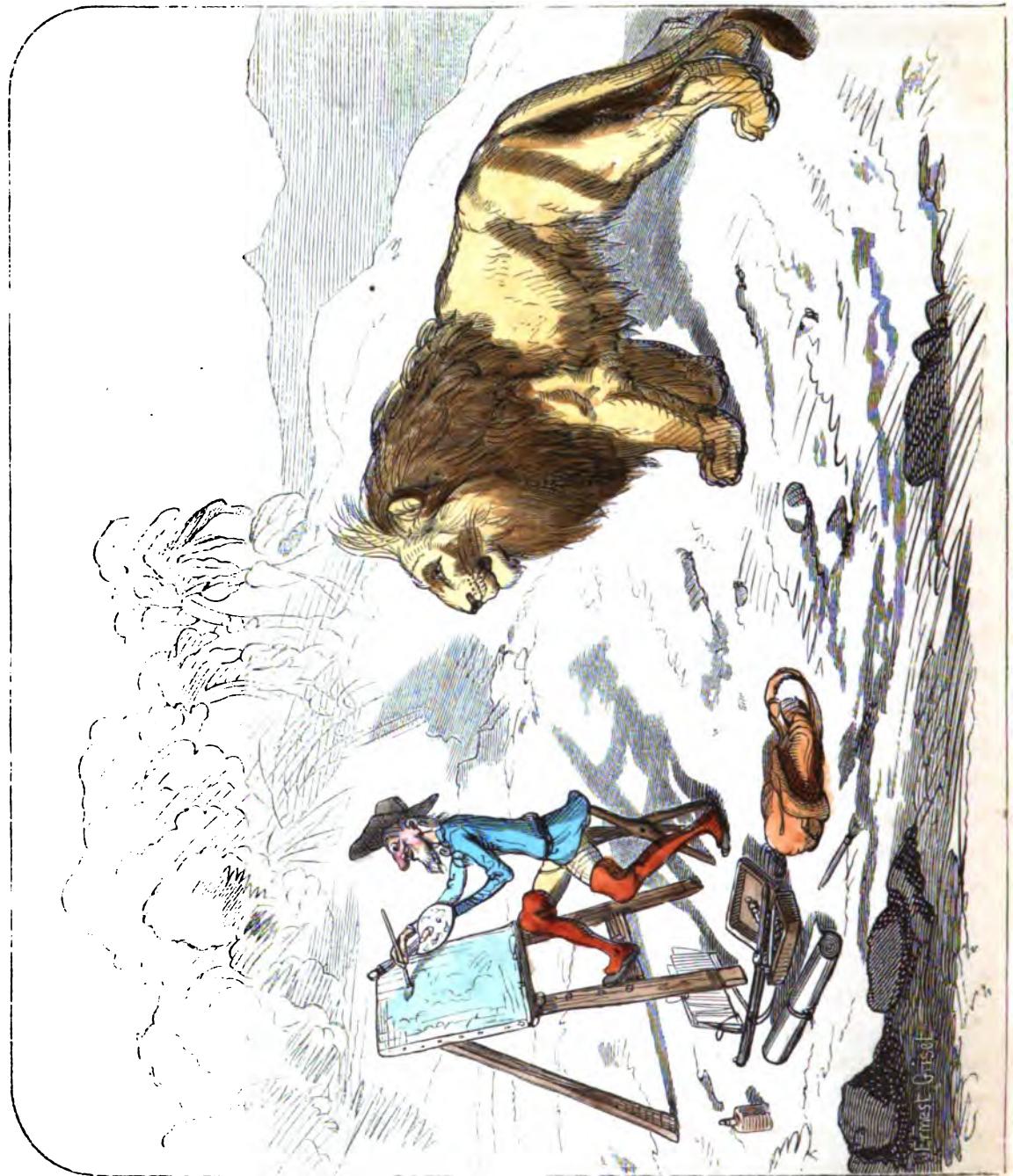
“The next day passed as the first had, as did the third and the fourth, by which time I was far advanced into the interior of the country, and, as could be plainly seen by the pathless jungle through which I had to force my way, remote from any human habitation. However, I didn't feel at all lonely. On the afternoon of the fourth day I climbed to the top of a banyan-tree, and there, not more than twenty miles off, was the glorious Wigglewaggle smiling under the sun like a beautiful bouquet miles in diameter, and smelling so powerfully, that now and then, when the gentle breeze blew my way, the scent of the flowers was so powerful as nearly to overcome me. However, I managed to survive it; and, descending the banyan, sopped the remainder of my bread—which by this time was growing rather stale—in some cocoa-milk, and made an excellent tea; after which I retired to rest, resolving to be up early in the morning and be well advanced in my first picture of Wigglewaggle scenery before the sunset.

“At daybreak I was again on the march, and by breakfast time I reached my destination. Shall I attempt to describe that paradise, gentlemen?”

“I wouldn't if I were you,” observed the matter-of-fact Mr. Corker. “You didn't come here to describe scenery, but to relate your adventures; and it seems to me, shipmate, that the sooner you enter on 'em the better it will be.”

“So be it,” replied Goliah Brass meekly. “I dare say I *do* appear slow in approaching my first adventure; but the fact is, gentlemen, and as Mr. Corker can bear witness, it was one of such an astonishing character, that I am almost afraid to relate it, lest you should suspect its truthfulness. Indeed, I am bound to confess that I never told it yet to any one who did *not* doubt its truthfulness. What I have suffered on account of my steady deter-





W.D.

GOLIATH BRAUN, SKETCHING IN THE GREAT WIGGLEGOLE, IS UNCONSCIOUS OF THE PASSAGE OF A CHURC.

mination to stick to the truth of that adventure, no man can tell. I've been laughed at, jeered at, pumped on, for sticking to it. I once told it to a gentleman whose misfortune it was to have travelled all over Africa except the Great Wigglewaggle Desert, who had the cruelty to kick me and pull my nose for sticking to it. And I mean sticking to it. I'd go to the stake sticking to it.

“It came about in this way, gentlemen. I had selected a lovely bit of landscape, and was working away at it as only a lover of his profession can work. My traps were about me, and I was slashing away at a rate that would certainly have seen the picture completed before dark, when all of a sudden the dead stillness was broken, and a sound smote my ears, causing me to leap up from my seat and to smudge my picture to that extent that it was completely ruined. It was the sound of a voice, of a human voice, as I thought—as I had reason for thinking, gentlemen, as you will allow, since I understood it—a tremendously deep and sounding voice like what might be imagined in a giant with a severe cold at his chest. Instantly I started round, and judge of my horror, my utter consternation, when my eyes encountered, not a human giant, but a monstrous lion!

“Yes, gentlemen, a tremendous brute of the species named, with a chest broader than that of any ox, a shaggy mane, and eyes that glowed in their caverns like red-hot charcoal, but still with a good-humoured twitching about his great wide black lips that, under the circumstances, was anything but unpleasant to observe. Moreover, it was plain from the fact that he kept his tail still that he was not very angry; indeed, when I came more particularly to observe the direction of the lion's eyes, I saw that they were fixed rather on the canvas I was painting than on myself—fixed on it with an expression in which there was something more than mere brute astonishment—a curious and critical sort of look, as though he was reckoning up the merits of the picture, and forming his private opinion as he went on. I was not mistaken, for, presently advancing a step, said he——”

“Said who?” asked we in a breath.

“The lion,” replied Mr. Brass.

“The *lion*!”

“Ah! that's where it is, you see!” observed Goliah Brass, wagging his head distressfully. “I *knew* you would be amazed. I can't help it, gentlemen. I can only repeat to you my determination to stick to my story as I have always stuck to it. I say the lion spoke and I understood him. I know that such an assertion sounds preposterous; but recollect, gentlemen, where what I relate happened! The lions of the Great Wigglewaggle

may be altogether different from other lions; nay, I make bold to say that they are; and all I ask is that you will give me credit for relating nothing but fact until some other traveller has the good fortune to discover that same Great Wigglewaggle Desert, and dispute my statements. Mind you, I don't say that the lion spoke the English language. I don't state for certain that he spoke *any* human language. It may have happened that, having inhaled the air breathed only by savage beasts, I imbibed at the same time a knowledge of lion language, and that after all the brute spoke only in his own tongue. I aint at all obstinate on that point; very likely that is how it *did* happen.

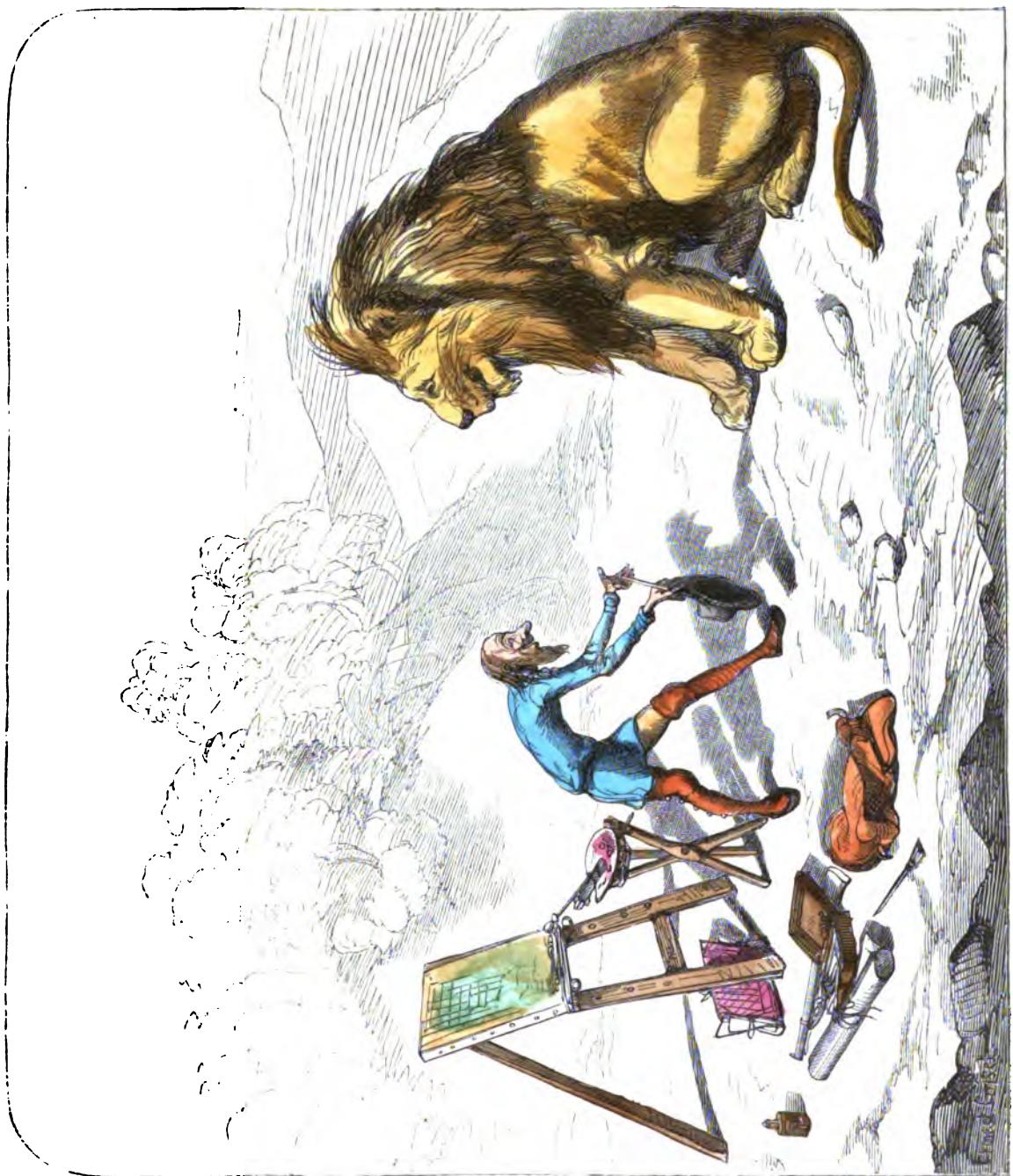
“ Well, as I was saying, finding that his attention was fixed on the picture, I plucked up heart and bowed to him in the politest manner, on which he advanced a step or two and sniffed at the canvas, and then gave the wet paint a lick, at once obliterating several stately trees and a bank of those lovely flowers the aleycompayneano. He didn't like the flavour, and, to my great alarm, faced round to me with a scowl on his expressive countenance, and his tail lashing like a waggoner's whip.

“ ‘ You milk-faced ape! ’ roared he, ‘ what do you mean by making all this nasty mess on my premises? Are you ignorant of where you are, sir, that you dare come here to slobber and daub and make the place smell fouler than a fox's den? ’

“ If I was ignorant before, you may be sure that I was now aware I had invaded the favourite retreat of the mighty king of beasts, and could expect to pay but one penalty, and that the extremest. For the moment I thought only of falling on my knees and imploring pardon, but an instant's cool reflection on the character of the animal with which I had to deal convinced me that to adopt such a course would be to lay myself open to a suspicion of cowardice—a weakness of all others contemptible in the eyes of the lion. Clearly it would be better to put a bold face on the matter and return him an answer to his question.

“ ‘ May it please your royal highness,’ said I, assuming to be quite at my ease—‘ may it please your royal highness, for once in your life you are labouring under a mistake: I am *not* ignorant of where I am. Unless I am altogether out in my reckoning, I am on the domain of your august self, and nobody than your humble servant can have a higher appreciation of its enchanting loveliness. Indeed, it is because I am so charmed by its rare beauty that I have ventured to trespass a little while on it, that I may carry away with me something more substantial than a mere recollection.’

“ He regarded me with a bewildered look. ‘ How d'ye mean carry away something more than a recollection? ’ said he presently; ‘ what would you carry away—the banyans,



the palms, and the fig-trees? Ho! ho! certainly you are the most conceited monkey I ever met! Come along, Mr. Carrier; let me help one of the trees on to your back.'

"And so saying, he reached up one of his tremendous paws, and grasping a great bough of a banyan, big round as my body, he tore it away with the greatest ease, and flung it towards me. It was lucky that I saw it coming and moved aside just in time to avoid it, at which he uttered a great roar of laughter that made the forest echo again.

"I beg your majesty's pardon," I hastened to remark; "if I were a monkey, and possessed as much conceit as is commonly ascribed to those animals, I might perhaps think of carrying away the trees of your estate bodily—that is, if I possessed as much insolence as conceit, of course," I hastened to add, seeing that he raised his eyebrows haughtily when I had thus far advanced my explanation—"but being no monkey, but a man, to entertain such notions is quite impossible."

"Once more he stared at me in great surprise, and then laughed contemptuously.

"'Nonsense,' said he, 'what else can you be except a monkey? You walk on your hind-legs like a monkey, you grin like a monkey, and you chatter like a monkey. What do you mean, you insolent beggar, by trying to come it over me like that? You'll try and persuade me that you are not good to eat next.'

"I trust I am no coward, but I must confess to feeling a sickly sort of sensation at my stomach as he made the last-mentioned bloodthirsty remark. Luckily, however, I was enabled to keep my countenance.

"Did your majesty ever before see a monkey that was like me?" I ventured to ask him.

"Never one so ugly," grinned he; "but there, I don't trouble myself about beauty; it's only skin deep, and my investigations go much deeper than that; the proof of beauty is in the eating—that's my motto."

"I was at a loss to convince him that I was a different creature from the disgusting one for which in his ignorance he mistook me, and there was no time to be lost, for he had begun to lick his lips in an alarming way. Suddenly a lucky thought popped into my head.

"No doubt your royal highness's acquaintance with monkeys is very extensive," said I, "but did you ever before meet a monkey that smoked tobacco?"

"I have heard of them that chewed it," replied he, winking one of his bold eyes at me. "I've heard my lioness tell that sort of rubbish to the cubs at home to keep 'em quiet when they were fractious through cutting their teeth; so I have heard her tell 'em about "the cow that jumped over the moon" and "the frog that would a-wooing go," but you don't hope to

wheedle me out of my supper by telling me about that sort of nonsense! Thank you, I've eaten nothing since breakfast, and all I hope is that you will turn out to be as uncommon a monkey as you would make yourself out to be. Come on.'

"Come on where, your majesty?" I asked tremblingly.

"Where? Why, home to be sure; I aint going to eat you out here, you fool, and I don't feel inclined to carry your carcass half-a-mile on an afternoon hot as this is. Come on now, before I make you."

"As he spoke he made a step towards me, and raised his fore-paw threateningly. Had I been a hunter like my brother Eli, and armed as Eli was, I would precious soon have convinced him of the sort of monkey I was; but, under the circumstances, what could I do? Besides my palette-knife and my maulstick, I was without weapon of any sort, so there was nothing, since he was bent on my destruction, but to succumb. Nevertheless, I resolved to do so in a dignified manner.

"Come along then," said I, "I'm ready. Just wait half-a-minute, though; it is my habit to smoke a pipe at this time o' day, and since we have half-a-mile to go, I may as well smoke it going along."

"With that I filled my little black pipe, and taking a lucifer-match from my pocket, struck it smartly on the sole of my shoe. The effect was as astonishing as it was instantaneous. Simultaneous with the bang he uttered an involuntary howl and leaped up in the air, and no sooner did he see the blaze than his tail fell as limp as a wisp of wet hay. Evidently it was the first time he had seen fire. As luck would have it, he hadn't perceived the lucifer-match.

"Blood and marrowbones! what's that?" he exclaimed.

"Nothing," I replied, coolly pulling at my pipe; "it's only my way of striking a light. It isn't the first time you ever saw a light struck, is it?"

"I've seen the light before," he answered, shifting from one leg to the other in an uncomfortable manner, "and I've heard it struck, but it was overhead when the sky was black; but little did I think that it was made by a monkey striking his fore-paw against his hind one."

"I saw at once the error into which the foolish brute had fallen, but of course it wasn't to my interest to set him right.

"Indeed!" I replied, feeling each moment more at my ease, "but that verifies the old proverb, "Live and learn." You are wrong, however, if you suppose that the way you have

seen is the only one by which I strike fire. It doesn't matter what part of my body is touched roughly, I spank away and flare up directly.'

"Humph!" he observed after a moment's reflection, 'that's awkward.'

"There you're wrong again," said I, laughing; "it's mighty convenient."

"I begin to think you aint a monkey, after all," said he, picking his teeth with his fore-claw in rather a foolish manner.

"I told your royal highness so at first, did I not? I am a man, Goliah Brass by name, and by profession an artist."

"What's being an artist—striking lights?" asked the ignorant brute.

"No, making pictures," I answered.

"But he didn't understand. 'What do you mean by pictures?' said he pettishly; 'I can't make out that crack-jaw sort of talk; make one of the thingumbobs and show me.'

"As you may depend, gentlemen, I was only too glad to have interested him and turned his mind for soever short a time from his sanguinary purpose. I cleared off the smudge from my canvas with a little turpentine, and then plucking a handful of flowers, I laid them close by, and by a few spirited dashes of my brush produced their exact counterpart. He was delighted.

"That's very nice," he exclaimed, rubbing his fore-paws together; "if it wasn't for the precious nasty smell they've got, I declare I shouldn't know one from the other. Not that flowers are much in my way; I prefer something that's good to eat."

"What meat does your royal highness prefer?"

"What meat? Why springbuck, or course," he replied—"nice young springbuck, you know, rising about two years old, with horns about so long."

"In a twinkling I rubbed out the bunch of flowers, and began to paint him a springbuck. As I began it he sat down by my side, watching me in simple curiosity, but as I proceeded he grew gradually more and more uneasy. By the time I had sketched the animal in outline he was on his legs, fidgeting and clawing the earth in a manner that would, I have no hesitation in saying, have made a less self-possessed man than I at that time was rather uneasy. By the time I had painted in one hind-quarter he could no longer stand still, but walked to and fro, moaning impatiently; still, although I had a sort of misgiving of what would be the result, I stuck to my job with a firm hand, and in a little while completed the other hind-quarter, when judge of my astonishment to hear the lion utter his loudest roar.

"I can't wait! I can't wait!" cried he; "let me eat that part first, and you can do the other part for me afterwards!"

“ And with that he rose in the air with a tremendous spring, and made fairly at the painting, and the next instant there was as pretty a wreck as you would wish to see—myself and my stool, my easel and my painting, with the lion struggling to free his talons from the hind-quarters in which they were transfix'd. I don't say, gentlemen, that that was not a proud moment for me. I don't deny that I was sensible that by his blundering act the king of beasts had paid as high a compliment to my genius as ever yet was conferred on painter, ancient or modern; still the situation was embarrassing. To say the least, it was questionable whether his admiration for my skill would exceed his rage and mortification at being disappointed of his favourite meat; indeed, there seemed every chance that as soon as he got out of the tangle he would make at me straight, for he glared at me as he struggled to free his paws in a manner that was frightful to behold. The worst of it was, the imposture I had put on him concerning the fire was exposed, if he had the sense to see it. I *had* been handled roughly, so roughly that my cap and my pipe were sent flying, but I had not gone off with a bang and didn't blaze up in the least. I thought that I detected something in his eye that told me that he suspected that I was humbugging him in this particular. Quick as thought I plucked half-a-dozen matches from my waistcoat-pocket, and holding the brimstone ends together in a bunch, contrived as I was scrambling on to my legs to rasp them against the hinder part of my trousers and set them blazing with a prolonged cr-rack.

“ ‘Keep off!’ I shouted, as he, frightened out of his wits, rolled half-a-dozen yards away. ‘I told you how it would be if I was touched roughly; it's very likely I shall go off again in a moment. Keep off, or you'll be all burnt up to a cinder as sure as you've got a mane.’

“ But his rage was too fierce to be so easily appeased. ‘Claw and chaw you!’ he yelled out; ‘just stay till I get my claws free of these filthy rags, and you *shall* go off’ to a dead certainty. I'll teach you to set my mouth watering with your confounded pictures, one lick at which turns me sick as a horse. I'll have your blood to take the taste out of my mouth, even if it is red-hot.’

“ This was critical. My ingenuity did not desert me.

“ ‘My blood!’ I repeated; ‘you *have* tasted my blood.’

“ ‘Have tasted it! How?—when?’ asked he, just as he had succeeded in disengaging his talons.

“ ‘It is on your lips now,’ said I desperately. ‘*It is what I paint my pictures with.* Didn't I tell you I was born and bred a painter?’

“I flatter myself, gentlemen, that that was a master-stroke, not that I may lay claim to it as entirely my own; it arose out of my dire necessity, gentlemen, which, as we all know, is the mother of invention. It saved my life beyond a doubt. He was completely baffled and bewildered.

“‘Your blood, is it?’ he exclaimed with an air of disgust. ‘Then all I’ve got to say is that you ought to be downright ashamed to go about with such abominable stuff in your veins. It would be a charity to put a creature like you out of the world. What the dickens is the use of you?’

“‘Hav’n’t I shown you?’

“‘How have you shown me?’

“‘Have I not convinced you that I can paint a picture so naturally that even an animal of your royal highness’s sense is for the moment deceived and mistakes it for reality?’

“‘Oh, yes, you have shown me *that*,’ returned he, grimly rubbing that part of his head on to which he pitched when he made a dash at the flimsy representation of the springbuck; ‘but pray what’s the use of a picture of an animal unless it’s painted so natural that it may be eaten?’

“‘But it isn’t every animal that is born to be eaten.’

“‘I should rather say not,’ observed he with a scornful curl of his upper lip, showing a row of teeth that was significant of the fate of any one who attempted to make meat of him.

“‘In my country, now,’ I continued, a happy thought entering my head, ‘it is the custom when we possess anything rare and beautiful to paint its likeness, lest we lose it and forget what it was like. As, for instance, the males of our kind very often have their likenesses painted to hang up at home, that the female kind may bear them in mind and respect them while they are away from home on business.’

“The bait took beyond my most sanguine expectation. Of course it is hard for one of us to say what is the standard of beauty amongst the lion tribe, but I should have thought that the specimen before me was about as ill-looking a ruffian as it was possible to imagine. Evidently that was not his opinion, however, and so you would have said had you witnessed his dandified air as he stood reflecting and twiddling his whiskers.

“‘Flay me!’ exclaimed he half aloud, ‘that doesn’t seem to be a bad idea.’

“‘Of course,’ I artfully continued, ‘it is only the mightiest and the handsomest of our male kind—the heads and chiefs of families, such as your royal highness is—that adopt the

practice. It is found not only highly ornamental but extremely useful, I assure your majesty. As, for instance, when the original is, as I said before, away on business, the little males and females his children look up at his picture and say to each other, "See, that is our strong, brave father; he has gone to seek us a dinner; how wrong it would be in us to be wicked and rude while such a father is away!" And his wife sees the likeness, and she says, "Ah, how like my noble husband! how I long to look on his magnificent face again!" And the jackals and wolves of the tribe, when they come nosing about the house for whatever may be picked up when the master is out, they, too, see the terrible likeness, and they wink their thievish eyes at each other and say, "Let us be off; if he returns and catches us, we shall get a mauling without doubt."

"Yes, yes," observed the old lion eagerly; "and when he was away—the handsome and noble one, I mean, and as you say—and any other young upstart whelp came showing off his jackanapes airs to the handsome one's lioness, he too would see the likeness, and think twice before he spoke once, eh? And even if she were wicked and unfaithful enough to smile on the pretty little monkey, *her* eyes would see the likeness on the wall, and she would pause and think on what the awful consequences might be, eh?"

"No doubt that is exactly what would be the effect of your royal highness's portrait hanging up in your den," I ventured to remark, as it was plain from the jealous rage the old fellow was working himself into that *he* was the animal whose peace of mind was threatened by some 'pretty little monkey' of his own species.

"Do you think so?" exclaimed he, approaching me and laying his paw on my shoulder in the most cordial manner, but with a thump that would certainly have caused an instant blaze and explosion there, had there been any truth in my statement of my fire-striking qualities. "Do you think so, O excellent painter? Do you think it likely that, with my portrait hanging up at home, my honour will be more secure than it now is?—that my mind will be freed from those tormenting doubts and suspicions that now assail it whenever I am away from the den for ever so short a time? Oh, my good friend" (here he put up his other paw and fairly embraced me, leaning his great head on my shoulder, and almost sobbing)—"oh, my best friend! if you *could* assist me in bringing about so comfortable a state of things, not only will I spare your life—which, I frankly assure you, it was my full intention till within the last few minutes to deprive you of—but you shall be my honoured guest, and live and eat with me as long as you please."

"I will assist you," I replied, shaking him heartily by the fore-paw, for despite the



He Establishes Himself as Painter in Ordinary to Lao Xu.



poor brute's declared intention to slay me (and, after all, there was something charmingly candid in the way he expressed it), it was impossible not to be moved by his earnest and affecting appeal. 'I will assist you,' said I, 'and that without fee or reward. If your royal highness will sit down just a few minutes while I strain a fresh bit of canvas, I will paint you a portrait so like yourself that your own mother would be puzzled to tell the difference.'

"So down he sat quiet as a lamb, and I began to paint. It can, as you will allow, gentlemen, in no way be to my interest to state what is untrue as regards this part of my story. I have told you how highly successful my painting of the springbuck was—how decided and unmistakable was his approval of it. Well, gentlemen, I assure you that in painting the lion's portrait I exercised at least ten times the care and skill that the springbuck had cost me; but with what result? I should have expected nothing else, I dare say, for in one case I had to do with the brute's mere coarse appetite, and in the other case with a much more delicate and subtle affair—his self-esteem and vanity. I was so deeply engrossed with my work that, beyond turning now and then to note a particular feature or expression, I did not observe his demeanour. True, as the likeness drew near completion, I was conscious of a sound as of chuckling proceeding from his lips, and, as you may easily understand, was not a little pleased, thinking, to be sure, that his satisfaction was so great that he could scarcely contain it. So encouraged, I worked away with much cheerfulness and vigour, and just as it was growing dark, put the finishing touch to the portrait, and, with a bow of triumph, turned to the sitter to announce the fact.

"Never shall I forget the expression of his countenance, should I live to be a hundred years old. I fully expected to find it beaming with delight, and during the last few moments had been consulting in my mind how I might best excuse myself from accompanying him, as I felt sure, in the fulness of his gratitude, he would presently invite me to do. On the contrary, his face, his whole body, to the tip of his tail, was expressive of nothing but the most unmitigated contempt and disgust.

"*'That* my likeness! That the handsome and noble portrait that is to hang in my den to inspire my lioness with respect for me and scare away fops and fawners! Why, you poor incapable wretch, you drivelling, scribbling, contemptible monkey, you would make me a laughing-stock! Add to my dignity, indeed! Why, that precious vixen of mine at home would give her ears to get hold of the hideous thing. Every time I turned my back there would be a company of young puppies invited to step in and laugh at it. Be off with you!

Pack up and take yourself away from my domain! Yah, you miserable dauber! I wouldn't demean the tip of my tail by touching you with it."

"And so saying, with another scornful glance and a haughty toss of his head, he turned tail and walked off, leaving me somewhat chagrined at his treatment of the picture over which I had taken such pains, but on the whole delighted to have escaped from what seemed a prospect of certain death. And now, gentlemen, it only remains for me to hand you a few sketches illustrative of the chief events in the story I have told you, and I have done."

So saying, he slid his hand into the breast-pocket of his threadbare coat and produced a bundle of papers, which he spread on the table and selected from the drawings, of which the accompanying are exact copies. The drawings he selected, however, were but four in number, whereas the bundle must have contained twenty at the very least; marvellous pictures some of them; three or four lying uppermost were descriptive of some one's adventures with an elephant, and on these monsieur the artist laid a hand.

"Pardon me, my dear friend," said he, "but to what do these refer?"

"Those are descriptive pictures of my poor brother Eli's adventures during that very time when I was engaged with the lion," replied Goliah Brass, wagging his head dismally. "Poor Eli! he's dead and gone now!"

"What! killed in his encounter with the elephant?" asked we in horror.

"Oh dear no," replied Mr. Brass after a pull at the egg-flip, to which Mr. Corker considerately helped him, and which, no doubt, after his lengthy narration, he stood much in need of. "It wasn't an elephant that could conquer Eli; he was a match for half-a-dozen elephants any day; at least I should judge so, considering that he came off without a scratch in the encounter I'm alluding to. I'll tell you the story if you are agreeable, gentlemen; it isn't a very long story, and I dare say I shall be able to get through it between this and dinner time."

"Ay," replied we, "we will have the elephant story, and we will all four dine together."





DIVISION II.

“ You must know,” continued Goliah Brass, his countenance and voice much improved as regards cheeriness since the invitation to stay and dine with us—“ you must know that the very instant my friend the lion turned his back I was not long in obeying his injunction to pack up and be off. Thrusting my brushes and pencils and the remainder of my tools into my coat-pocket, I converted my maulstick into a walking-cane and set off as fast as I could.

“ The shades of night were just descending over the dismal forest as I set out in about as melancholy a frame of mind as could be imagined. True, my life was spared, but of what use was it to me? My zeal for painting was altogether spoiled, my wallet contained nothing to eat except the rind of the Dutch cheese I have already mentioned, every step I took I knew led me farther into the wilderness and away from my native home, and yet I dared not turn back for fear of once more encountering that big bullying lion, who by this time may have repented that he allowed his disgust to balk him of a supper. I am not ashamed to say, gentlemen, that when I thought on my wretched plight the tears ran down my cheeks and I called aloud on Eli. I called on Eli several times, and at first it seemed that he answered me, but, to my horror, I presently discovered that what I took for Eli’s voice was that of a bear; so I didn’t call any more, but made my way rapidly through the wood and continued to make my way through it until the night waned and the sun rose and showed me that I was approaching the skirts of it, and that beyond the country was very mountainous, with not a sprig of verdure to be seen for miles. ‘Perhaps,’ thought I, ‘they are the Gnashanripem Mountains, and if I can find something to eat and drink that will sustain me long enough, it may be my good luck to fall in with my brother Eli.’

“ But it seemed a forlorn hope. In about an hour from the time when I first perceived the mountains from the Wigglewaggle Forest I had gained the top of the highest one of them, which commanded a view of several miles in extent, but no Eli. Not a sign of a solitary living thing, nor of a blade of grass, nor of a drink of water, only the blazing sun shining down on the white and flinty rocks, blistering and baking ‘em so that it was impossible to stand still; so that any one who had seen me would never have taken me for

a forlorn and solitary wretch without a friend in the world, but for a lively maniac who had taken a fancy to ascending a high mountain to dance a horncpipe on its summit. But not a sign of Eli. At last, loth though I was, and melancholy enough, as you may easily imagine, I descended towards the plain again, filled with the harrowing reflection that in all probability by this time my poor brother had found a grave in the maw of some ravenous beast of prey. If I, a peaceful artist, rather inclined to avoid lions and tigers than otherwise, had had such a narrow squeak for my life, what could be hoped for him whose deliberate aim and intention it was to seek the haunts of all such and destroy them? To be sure, Eli's pluck, as I knew, was invincible, but think on the extraordinary breed of animals with whom he would have to contend!

“I was brought to a complete standstill when I got as far as this with my dismal reflections, and, completely overcome, sank down on a ledge of rock, which, on account of its great heat, caused my tears to hiss as they fell on it with a noise like when red-hot iron is sprinkled with water. I have not the least doubt that had nothing occurred to rouse me I should have remained there, deadened to all sense of pain by my extreme grief, till I was toasted to a cinder; but I *was* roused. Coming on my ears at first no louder than the littlest whisper, I was aware of a rumbling sound. It died away, and in a minute or so was heard again, this time a little louder. ‘It’s thunder,’ thought I; ‘we are going to have a storm, which is precious lucky; it will cool places, and make them more comfortable to sit down on. Besides, the rain accumulating in the hollows will yield me a drink, and of all things in the world that is what I stand most in need of.’ Again the sound died away, and again it made itself heard with ten times the distinctness of the previous occasion, and, to my astonishment, I was convinced that it was *not* thunder. It was too shrill for thunder; it was more like a blast of a mighty trumpet, and accompanying it was a duller noise, like the tramping of a thousand horses with their shoes taken off.

“I had come a great way down the mountain—to within a few hundred yards of the base of it, in fact—and the jagged rock rising on all sides of me prevented anything like a broad look-out. I hardly know how to describe the tract of country thereabout, though I much wish I could, as it would help to make quite clear the incident I am about to relate, and which otherwise may sound slightly improbable. From the foot of that mountain to its summit it was like a tremendous flight of stairs, each stair being a hillocky plain a mile or so in width, the ‘risings’ from flat to flat being nearly perpendicular, and so spiky that unless you were careful at every step you would have your boot speared off your foot—as

was the case with me until I learnt the proper way of setting my foot down—and waste a great deal of time in wrenching it off the spike on which it had stuck. It was on the bottom stair but one—if I may so express it—that I was sitting when I heard the extraordinary sound I have already described to you, and listening carefully I could easily enough make out that it came from *above* and not below me, and every moment it increased in force. My



MARVELLOUS AND UNEXPECTED MEETING OF THE BROTHERS BRASS.

mind was at once made up. There could be no doubt that the mysterious sound meant *something*; if it meant good for me, the sooner I made its closer acquaintance the better; if it meant harm, why, it is better to face danger than to let it overtake you. Starting from my seat, I made at a brisk pace to the next ledge, resolved to climb it and to go on climbing until I was able to overlook the mystery, when imagine my astonishment as, just as I was approaching the steep—the noise above now so much increased as to be almost deafening—a man came spinning down the slope, and alighted—fortunately on his feet—close beside me!

“It was my brother Eli! Ragged, tousled, and bloody though he was, it was impossible to mistake him. Eli’s hair, which was red and unruly, was a thing needing only to be once seen to be for ever remembered, and as for his features, I’d undertake to swear to the shadow of them. Besides, there were his leather leggings, and his powder-horn was hanging at his side; but he was without his cap and without his gun—all he had in his hand was a queer-looking object, something black and indiarubber-looking, a foot long and about as big round as a man’s wrist; at one end there was a tuft of bristles, and the other end was all red and gory, as though it had very recently been cut from a living creature.

“Our mutual astonishment was great, but our affection was greater, and without exchanging a word we fell on each other’s necks, and embraced as became brothers who never expected to meet again on this side of the grave. Presently, however, and when our joyful emotion had somewhat abated, I was recalled to the marvellous present by feeling a trickling down my neck as well as down my cheeks, and putting up my hand, withdrew it all bloody.

“‘Don’t be alarmed,’ said Eli, ‘it is only the tricklings from my trophy. I had forgotten that I had it in my hand when I flung my arms round your neck, my dear brother.’

“‘Your trophy, Eli?’ I exclaimed, eyeing the disgusting-looking thing; ‘why, what on earth is it?’

“‘All I was able to secure of as prime a tusker as it was ever my good luck to set eyes on,’ replied Eli, who was one of the coolest young fellows you would meet in a day’s walk, and sometimes quite humorous in his remarks. ‘I should much like to have made *both* his ends *meat*. However, let us make the most of what fortune has sent us. Have you dined, Golly? if you have, p’raps you won’t mind giving a hand towards cooking *my* dinner; I’m as hungry as an ostrich.’

“‘I have not dined, Eli,’ I replied, ‘neither have I breakfasted; in fact, I am as empty as I can well be, but I cannot bring my mind to partake of that horrible reptile.’

“I thought it was a serpent or part of one.

“‘If you aint a better artist than naturalist, you’ll never be hung in the National Gallery, Golly,’ laughed my brother Eli. ‘What sort of reptile do you call an elephant’s tail, eh?’

“‘An elephant’s tail!?’

“‘Nothing less, I assure you,’ replied he, collecting some sticks and with a lucifer-match making a fire, and laying the queer-looking thing thereon; ‘not an inch less, Golly.

I sliced it as close off by the stump as you could slice a carrot-top. Since you haven't dined, I can promise you a treat; nobody but those who have tasted it can form any idea of how delicious baked elephant's tail really is.'

"But how——?"

"Be good enough to wait until it's done, and then while we are discussing it I will tell you how it came into my possession," interrupted Eli, as with a forked stick he managed the grilling of the tail, which, now that it was hot through, emitted a remarkably pleasant odour—not unlike that of baked pork that has been stuffed with sage and onions. From what source Eli had derived his knowledge of cookery, even I, his brother, have not the least idea; but to watch him over that elephant's tail was a lesson to anybody who took interest in such matters. Had it been my case, I should, when the joint was done, have taken it off the fire and skinned it, and in all probability have burned my fingers in the process; but Eli knew a better way than this. When the tail was done to a turn he took a big pinch of gunpowder from his flask and flung it over the roast, and with a no less satisfactory result than its flying out of the embers on to a clean patch of rock with every particle of skin and hair exploded from it. Close by there was a little hollow about the size of a common baking-dish, and, having first wiped it out quite clean with the tail of his shooting-jacket, Eli popped the roast therein, and giving it three slashes with his clasp-knife, set it immediately swimming in half a dishful of the most delicious gravy. I no longer hesitated to partake of the meal. I dare say my hunger, which I needn't mention was by this time alarming, had not a little to do with it, but I may conscientiously declare that never before or since have I tasted anything approaching that tail for juiciness or fineness of flavour. If I was a rich man, baked elephant's tail would be a luxury not unfrequently found on my dining-table.

"Eli was as hungry as I was, so that for twenty minutes or so we found other occupation for our mouths besides talking, but our appetite slackening while we discussed the last few small-end joints, I related to Eli the particulars of my adventures in the Great Wiggle-waggle Desert, showing him the sketches made on the spot, or as shortly afterwards as circumstances would permit, that he might better comprehend their terrific nature. When I alluded to the marvellous gift of speech possessed by the lion, I observed that Eli gave a start and uttered a brief whistle. For an instant a cruel pang shot through my breast as I thought that my own brother, who of course knew me better than anybody, was inclined to doubt my veracity.

“ ‘Brother Eli,’ said I, ‘I trust that you don’t suspect me of drawing on my imagination as regards——?’

“ ‘As regards the speaking lion?’ interrupted he eagerly. ‘My dear brother, so far from doubting the fact, I am able to corroborate it out of my own experience, as you will learn when I come to tell you what has happened to me since we parted.’

“ As you may imagine, this gave me great satisfaction, and, anxious to hear in what manner Eli could corroborate my account of the talking brute, I hurried through the remainder of my story as quickly as possible.

“ Like yourself, brother Goliah,” Eli began, “ nothing at all worth remembering happened to me for several hours after we parted company at the cross-roads. Without meeting a single creature, beast or biped, I trudged on, pausing only once at midday to have a bit of dinner, till the evening, when, being still unable to discover the least trace of any sort of game, I began to think that either the celebrated hunting plains of Gnashantearem were much farther away than I had been led to imagine, or that they were altogether a delusion, and that I might as well have brought with me no more than a little salt to sprinkle on the tails of the rhinoceroses and hippopotami I expected to catch as to have burdened myself with such a load of powder and bullets.

“ Filled with these unsatisfactory reflections, I was half a mind to turn back and endeavour to rejoin you, but finally resolved to persevere through the next day, and to that end made myself comfortable for the night under a tree, with my wallet, which contained my ammunition as well as my provision, under my head, and my gun resting handily by my side.

“ Being very tired, it was not long before I dropped into a doze, which I have no doubt would soon have led to sleep itself, when my ears were made aware of a loud chirruping noise, such as might be made by a sparrow of gigantic growth, in the boughs immediately over my head. At first I took but little notice of the noise, merely opening my eyes to see from where it proceeded and closing them again immediately.

“ But somehow the stupid, monotonous ‘chip, chipping’ disturbed my repose. You know, Goliah, how an insignificant noise, the shaking of a loose window-sash, the scratching of a mouse behind the wainscot even, will irritate a sleepy mind. I wanted to sleep, and was kept just sufficiently awake by that wretched bird to know that it was the sole hindrance. I waved my arms as I lay, and cried ‘Hish! hish!’ and away it flew, and I thought my persecution was at an end, and I once more composed my head on my bundle.

But it was of no use—chip! chip! chip!—the tiresome bird was back again, uttering his low, jarring note louder than ever. Again I waved my arms, and again it flew off. ‘If you come back again, my fine fellow,’ said I to myself, ‘you’ll get such a blowing-up as you won’t recover from in a hurry.’

“ Back it came, and I kept my word. My gun, which, as you know, is (was, I ought rather to say, for goodness only knows what has become of it by this time) a double-barrel one, as I have already told you, stood just at hand against the stem of the tree. Without rising from my recumbent position, I quietly put out my hand, seized my weapon, and in a flash my tormentor plumped down fairly into my hands, minus its head, which my bullet had carried away.

“ It was a larger bird than, sitting high up in the tree, it appeared—as big as a magpie, I should think, but slimmer, and of a brown colour throughout. As it was headless, of course it was impossible to judge what its species was—at least to one of my limited knowledge of ornithology, which, as you will presently see, my dear Golly, led me into an almost fatal trap, and shows the necessity of a huntsman being a naturalist of no mean order.

“ Well, my first thought was to throw the wretched bird away, but it immediately occurred to me that if my luck to-morrow was no better than it had been to-day, there was a chance of my being particularly glad of its carcass towards making me a dinner; so I took the trouble to get up, tie a bit of twine to one of its feet, and hang it to a gnarl in the bark of my tree overhead, and, as I thought, out of harm’s way. Then, as by this time it had grown quite dusk, I once more lay down and was speedily fast asleep.

“ How long I slept I haven’t the least idea, but I woke in a tremendous fright. It seemed as though cannon was bang-banging about my ears, and, starting to my seat, there I beheld a sight that rather unnerved me. You will, no doubt, remember, Golly, that the night before last was a brilliant moonlight night, so that you could see every object about you as clear as day. It needed, however, not to have been nearly so light to have shown me the terrible spectacle on view under my very nose, as I may say. Within three yards of me, and all of a row, stood four gigantic elephants, they being, as far as my bewildered senses would allow me to make out, a grown male and female and two calves—that is to say, calves in comparison with the monsters they stood between, but, unless lying on one’s back very much incapacitates a man for correct measurement, I’ll be bound that the

smallest of these calves was eight feet high at the very least, while the old ones were every inch of fifteen feet high.

“The noise as of firing off of cannon was easily accounted for, my dear Goliah. Every one of their eight piggy eyes was fixed, not on me, my brother, but on that confounded headless bird gibbeted to the tree! Each one was wailing and trumpeting through his proboscis—the shrill trumping of the young ones concerting musically with the deep braying of the old cow and bull—and beating their sides with their elastic trunks with a noise of twenty coopers hooping a tun. Besides this, Golly, they raised their voices—and now you will understand why I started and whistled when you arrived at a certain part of your astonishing narrative—they raised their voices and *spoke*. In voices choked by the intensity of their grief, it is true, but still intelligible enough to anybody like myself having so vast an interest in listening to what they might have to talk about. It was the old cow’s voice that was heard above the rest.

“‘It is gone! it is dead, my calves!’ wailed she, ‘our beautiful Buphaga! our sweet little cherub that so faithfully and lovingly guarded our welfare and kept such untiring watch for our enemies, to warn us of their coming by the music of its sweet throat. It is gone, my children! It thrust its head into danger for our sake, doubtless, and see it is bitten off! O that we had the monster who did this here! Were it Borele himself, the black rhinoceros with the two horns, his life should be sacrificed; we would fall on him and crush him in the mud with our united knees.’

“And then the two young elephants set up their pipes shriller than ever, and the old bull, the tears falling from his eyes and glistening on his dazzlingly white tusks, banged away at his ribs as though it was his intention to stave them in.

“Now indeed a light broke in upon my guilty mind, Goliah. I had slain the elephant’s guardian bird, classically known as *Buphaga Africana*. Nor can I plead that I erred in ignorance. I had never seen the bird before, but I had read about him, how that his whole life is devoted to the care of elephants, hippopotami, and such-like tremendous brutes, whose heads are too thick to admit of their thinking for themselves—how that, when one of these huge brutes sleeps, Buphaga will perch on its back, or on a bough in its close vicinity, and by its screaming cries warn it of the approach of danger, scrupling not to assail by pecking the inner and tender parts of the animal’s ear should it be slow to rouse to the warning. I had seen pictures of the bird, and should probably have recognised it but for my confoundedly true aim, that, along with the bird’s head, had

carried away its chief distinguishing feature, its bradawl-like beak. Meanwhile, I sat as still as possible, fearing each moment that I should be discovered; indeed, it was only because I was so very much below their line of vision that I was not seen as soon as they approached the tree. However, this natural advantage was set aside presently by the involuntary ague that seized on my limbs and caused the underwood and twigs on which I was reclining to rustle to that extent that the old bull paused in his drumming and looked down to see what the row was about. I can never forget the flashing of his eyes as they encountered mine.

“‘ Hallo! Dash my tusks!’ he exclaimed, ‘ what’s this?’

“ And whipping the tip of his trunk under me, he made a round turn about me with it and held me to a level with his furious eyes, whereat the old cow gave a shriek of amazement, and the two calves, who, I forgot to mention, were both females, started back, screaming and covering their eyes with their flapping ears.

“‘ What are you? who are you?’ stormed the old elephant, holding me so tight round the waist as to cause me to breathe very short and uncomfortably. ‘ How came you here, and so close by our dear dead Buphaga?’

“‘ He slew it, the foreign monster!’ cried the old cow, elevating her trunk and wailing at her loudest pitch. ‘ It never saw so strange a creature as this is before, and did not know that it was an enemy; that is how he managed to get so close to it as to be able to bite its head off!’

“‘ Is that the case?’ roared the old bull, giving me a shake that tore off two of my brace-buttons.

“‘ On the word of a man and a Briton,’ I gasped, ‘ I no more bit its head off than you did. I’d scorn the action.’

“‘ Then how came you lying down so close to where the poor bird was murdered and left hanging?’ inquired the bull elephant, releasing his hold somewhat, but regarding me with eyes full of suspicion.

“‘ I’ll tell you how I came there,’ I replied, instantly making up my mind as to the best line of defence to adopt. ‘ You don’t know me, and I don’t know you; but I have heard, as has all the world, of the goodness of this poor little bird, and happening to come along, and seeing his poor headless body hanging here, I was so overcome by grief that I could not go another step, and fell down just where you found me.’

“ This story seemed to go down very well with the stupid old bull, and he looked at

his wife to see if she saw the probability of the explanation. She did not, her eye being fixed on something else, on nothing less, indeed, than a fragment of the same twine by which the Buphaga was suspended, hanging from the pocket of my jacket.

“ ‘ You happened to pass and saw the bird just as we find him, eh ? ’ said she.

“ ‘ Exactly, ma’am.’

“ ‘ Then what does this mean ? ’ exclaimed she, whisking out the fag of twine with the tip of her trunk, and holding it up before her husband’s gaze.

“ ‘ Aha ! ’ echoed the old bull, tightening his grasp again, ‘ mind what you are saying, my friend. What does that mean ? ’

“ For a moment I felt somewhat perplexed, but soon recovered my self-possession.

“ ‘ Its meaning is simple enough,’ I replied. ‘ As I said before, coming along I saw the poor Buphaga murdered and lying—’

“ ‘ Murdered and hanging, you said,’ interrupted the shrewd old cow.

“ ‘ Then it was very ridiculous in me to say such a thing,’ I answered ; ‘ for how could the poor bird have hung himself up there after his head was off ? ’

“ ‘ Nobody said that it could,’ replied the cow elephant snappishly ; ‘ what I said—at least, what I *meant* to say—was that—’

“ ‘ The villain who bit the bird’s head off hung it up, I presume you were about to say, ma’am,’ said I ; ‘ but if you will take the trouble to look closer, I think you will agree with me that it was not the hand of an enemy that tied so tender a bow as that. *My* hand tied it, ma’am. It went against my feelings to see so good a bird lying in the dirt, so I took it up respectfully, and served it as you see.’

“ She was only half convinced, however. ‘ Stand him down a little while,’ said she, ‘ and we will search him.’

“ So, to my great relief, the old bull stood me on my feet, and in a twinkling I felt the cow’s trunk in my jacket-pocket, and in an instant she had out the flask containing the remains of my Irish whisky.

“ ‘ What’s this ? ’ she asked, at the same time dexterously drawing the cork and taking a sniff at it ; ‘ it smells very good.’

“ ‘ It tastes better than it smells, ma’am,’ I replied ; ‘ it’s drunk in large quantities by the elephants of Ireland. Just wet your lips with it.’

“ She did so, and smacked them afterwards, and then giving the flask a tilt, emptied its contents down her capacious gullet.

“ ‘ Give my compliments to the Irish elephants when next you see ‘em,’ observed the intelligent brute, winking as though the whisky had already got up into her head—‘ give them my compliments, and tell them that if their manners are as good as their liquor I should be happy to make their acquaintance.’

“ ‘ You may depend on ‘my delivering your message at the very earliest opportunity, ma’am,’ I replied.

“ ‘ And what’s this?’ she inquired, handling my powder-horn with the finger and thumb of her proboscis.

“ I was afraid she might have heard of it under its proper name, so I replied, unscrewing the top that she might see—

“ ‘ That is snuff, may it please your cowship.’

“ ‘ Is it as nice as the other stuff?’ she asked. ‘ Do you put it into your mouth?’

“ There did not seem much in this question, and I have no doubt, my dear Goliah, that you or any other ordinary person would have been not at all inspired by it; but it is different with a man who is heart and soul a hunter—who lives but to circumvent beasts of the chase, and is ever on the alert for a means of doing so; the more novel the means the better, of course. No sooner were the words out of her mouth than there flashed to my mind an expedient the originality of which was only equalled by its daring. It was a pity that my scheme miscarried, as I think you will say when I acquaint you with its nature.

“ ‘ It is nicer than the other stuff, ma’am,’ I answered—‘ ten times nicer, but it is so much more powerful that only males dare take it. You don’t drink it, you draw it down your throat out of a snuff-box.’

“ ‘ And what sort of a thing is a snuff-box?’ inquired the old bull, who, like his wife and daughters, seemed to have quite forgotten their grief at the death of the Buphaga in their curiosity respecting the queer things I had to show them.

“ ‘ This is it,’ said I, taking up my double-barrelled gun—one barrel of which was, as you will recollect, wasted on the bird. *Now you see what my scheme was, hey, Golly?*’ said Eli.

“ No, indeed, I don’t,” I replied; “ what good could come to the old bull from smelling a gun-barrel? How could it benefit *you* to cheat him into the belief that gunpowder was snuff?”

“ You always was a dull lad, Golly,” replied Eli, laughing as he playfully poked me between my ribs with the butt of his hunting-knife. “ Pray did I start on this expedition

with the intention of doing good to bull elephants and other ivory-bearers? Did I carry a gun to serve as a snuff-box to them? No, Golly, my scheme was this—to induce the bull to take a sniff at the barrels, *and to blow his brains out* while he was in the act. But, as I have already hinted, the plan miscarried, and all through the greediness of the old cow. 'This is the snuff-box,' said I to the old bull, taking up the gun and politely handing it to him for his inspection. 'You put the snuff in as I will presently show you, and then you hold the end of the box between your teeth and draw in your breath as hard as you can. Would you like to try it?'

" 'Very much,' replied the old bull.

" 'I shall try it first!' exclaimed his wife; 'let me try it first, dear, and then you will know better how to go about it. See, now, you take the end of the box within your lips so' (and she suited the action to the word, the old bull holding the stock of the gun by the tip of his trunk), 'and then you—'

" 'Yes, yes, I know,' interrupted the bull, objecting to being made to look little before a stranger; 'all right, let go.'

" 'I sha'n't let go; I shall have the first dose,' replied the vixen, with the gun still between her lips. But scarcely had she uttered the words when the bull, giving an angry shake at his end of the gun, 'bang!' it went, and the next instant the upper part of the cow's obstinate old head was seen flying over the neighbouring trees, and down went her carcass like a felled tree, while instantly the ground was deluged with her life stream ankle deep.

" The accident—for really, Goliah, it deserves to be called by no other name—astonished me, I can tell you, but what was its effect on the gigantic old bull and his two daughters! There is no word in the English tongue to express it. It must have been a sort of hysterics that seized on the two young females, for instantly they both floundered on to the ground, kicking out their eight clumsy legs with all their might, and shrieking as only a female elephant can shriek. The old bull, however, was much more dignified in his amazement and fright. He stood without making any noise at all, his flappy ears and his tail on end, touching his forehead with the top of his trunk—a very affecting picture of perfect bewilderment, I assure you. Evidently he was stunned, and had my gun been loaded, it would have been the easiest matter in the world to have planted a bullet behind his ear; not only was the weapon unloaded, however, but it was lying just where the bull had dropped it, in a puddle of his wife's blood, and quite unfit for use until it was cleaned and dried.

“While he remained in his present condition he was no more to be feared than a wooden elephant, but how long his bewilderment would last was as impossible to conjecture as was the sort of mood he would be in when he roused. Would he make the best use of his legs and run away as soon as he recovered sense to use them, or would he be filled with fury and vengeance against me as the instigator of the murder of his wife? As I said before, it was purely an accident, and had he been amenable to reason, I could easily enough have convinced him—I have shown you that he was an animal easy to fudge—that I was not the least in fault. It seemed to me, however, that when he came to himself, the probabilities were that he would *not* be in a condition for cool argument, and that I had better, if he would allow me, be off as soon as possible.

“To my great delight he did allow me. He allowed me to pick up my gun from under his very trunk and to steal away without so much as turning his head to see which way I was going. When I had run to a distance of a couple of hundred yards or so (for run I did, as you may depend, as soon as I was clear of the trees), I looked back, and there he was standing exactly in the position I had left him in, and though I could not see the two young females, I could see the dust they were kicking up and I could hear ‘em shrieking. I brought up to a standstill. ‘If you are fool enough to throw away *your* chance, I am not inclined to throw away *mine*,’ said I, and, taking a bit of wadding from my pocket, I proceeded with all haste to clear out my gun before I loaded it to have a shy at him. Just as I was ramming home the charge, however, I happened to look in his direction, and though his back was towards me I knew that he was recovering, for his tail had lost its rigid erectness, and was swinging to and fro like the pendulum of a clock that is very much too fast. ‘If you will only wait another ten seconds I’m ready for you, my beauty,’ said I to myself as I hastened to complete the loading.

“But he wouldn’t wait. Suddenly, as though he had heard what I was thinking about, he wheeled about and charged at me with a bellow that sent the startled leaves showering from the trees. His pace was so terrific there was no use in attempting to run in a straight line for it, so I dodged about amongst the trees, making sudden shifts and turnings, in attempting to follow which he frequently brought his thick head bang against a tree-trunk. This, however, instead of checking him in his pursuit of me, seemed rather to increase his ferocious determination to capture and take revenge on me. Finding this to be the case, and that each moment he approached me nearer and nearer, I seized the gun-barrel between my

teeth, and sprang into the handiest tree and scrambled amongst the thickest of its branches, hoping that he would not perceive the manœuvre, and pass on without observing me. Not he. Stunned and stupid as he had appeared but a few moments since, he was wide awake *now*, and making straight for my tree, to my great dismay encircled its trunk with his own and made preparations for hauling it down. It was a stout tree, but what stick of timber could resist the enormous strength of that four-footed giant? Finding that he could not tug it out by strength of trunk, he looked round it, and discovering a gnarled and protruding bump at a convenient height, he set his shoulder under it and endeavoured to prise it up, and this dodge failing like the first, he scratched his head a moment reflectively with the tip of his trunk, and then deliberately set about digging up the ground about the tree's roots with his long tusks.

“There seemed no chance for me. Had there been another tree within a dozen feet, I would have had no hesitation in leaping into it. I would have completed the operation of loading and fired at the huge monster, but he kept the tree rocking so incessantly that it was hard work holding on, even with both hands, and quite impossible to take aim even if I did succeed in loading. My fate seemed inevitable, when that good luck, Golly, for which ever since a child I was so remarkable, came to my aid.

“Looking down from my perch, I saw that the brute had excavated quite a deep hole about the root, and his villainous eyes happening at that moment to meet mine, my aghast look gave him encouragement, and he went to work again with a will, till the tree rocked frightfully and threatened each moment to topple to the earth. It was as much as I could do to keep my footing, and while endeavouring to do so, plump went down my left leg up to the knee. For an instant I thought that I was slipping down *outside* the tree, but I speedily and to my great joy discovered my mistake—I was slipping *inside* the tree! Sound as it looked, it was hollow from top to bottom, and opened a means of escape to me I was not long in availing myself of. With my disengaged foot I stamped a bigger hole in the rotten crown large enough for my body to pass through, and then noiselessly as possible down I slid to the very bottom.

“Only in the barest time, Goliah. Scarcely had my feet found bottom when, with horrible crunching noise that set my teeth on edge for hours after, the tree yielded and fell with a tremendous noise. It happened exactly as I expected it would; soon as the tree fell the elephant hurried to the crown of the tree to pick me out of the branches amongst which he last saw me, leaving the great opening at the bottom quite unguarded. Quick as thou

I crept out, keeping on all fours amongst the brushwood till I was fifty yards away, and then I got on my feet and ran, just looking behind to see the stupid brute still tearing amongst the boughs at the top end of the fallen tree, and looking the picture of baffled rage and bewilderment.

“It is astonishing, my dear Goliah, how the cleverest amongst us are sometimes neglectful of the most homely maxims. I think I may venture to say that the way in which I had defeated the diabolical designs of the bull elephant evinced my possession of no small amount of ingenuity and coolness, but, the feat accomplished, I was guilty of a weakness reprehensible even in a schoolboy. ‘Never halloo till you are out of the wood,’ says the old-fashioned saw, but I disregarded it and did halloo, or rather I laughed. I laughed a loud and derisive laugh, and then bending low amongst the bushes, so that it was impossible for him to see me, I scuttled away faster than ever.

“It was a rash thing to do, as I was almost instantly made aware. The old bull hearing my voice, and discovering thereby that I had escaped, stared about him in helpless amazement, and no doubt I should have succeeded in getting away after all but for those confounded daughters of his. I had forgotten all about them, and, as ill luck would have it, took the very road where I had last seen them sprawling in hysterics. They were on their legs now, and I came so pat upon them that it was impossible to avoid them, standing as they did in a path the width of which was completely blocked by their bodies, while each side of the path was thicket of the thorny kind, much too dense to penetrate. It was not a time for hesitation ; their backs were towards me, and making a spring at the shorter one, who I don’t suppose stood much over seven foot, I cleared her leapfrog fashion, and, to her great astonishment, alighted just before her eyes.

“Neither she nor her sister, however, was so astonished as to be bereft of the power of speech. Soon as ever they set eyes on me, they turned about towards their father and set up screaming at the top of their hideous voices—‘Here he is ! here he is, father ! he’s running this way ; quick, father, quick, or the murderer of our poor mother will escape !’ and immediately following came a thundering roar and a crashing of bushes and small timber that told me that my enemy was once more in pursuit.

“I ran for my life. I am aware, my dear Golly, that you have seen me run with tolerable swiftness, the prize being a new hat or a silver watch, and I must say that if any one had asked me on those occasions, ‘Can you run any faster ?’ I should have answered ‘No’ in all honesty, but, Lor’ bless you, Goliah, my pace on those occasions was that of a

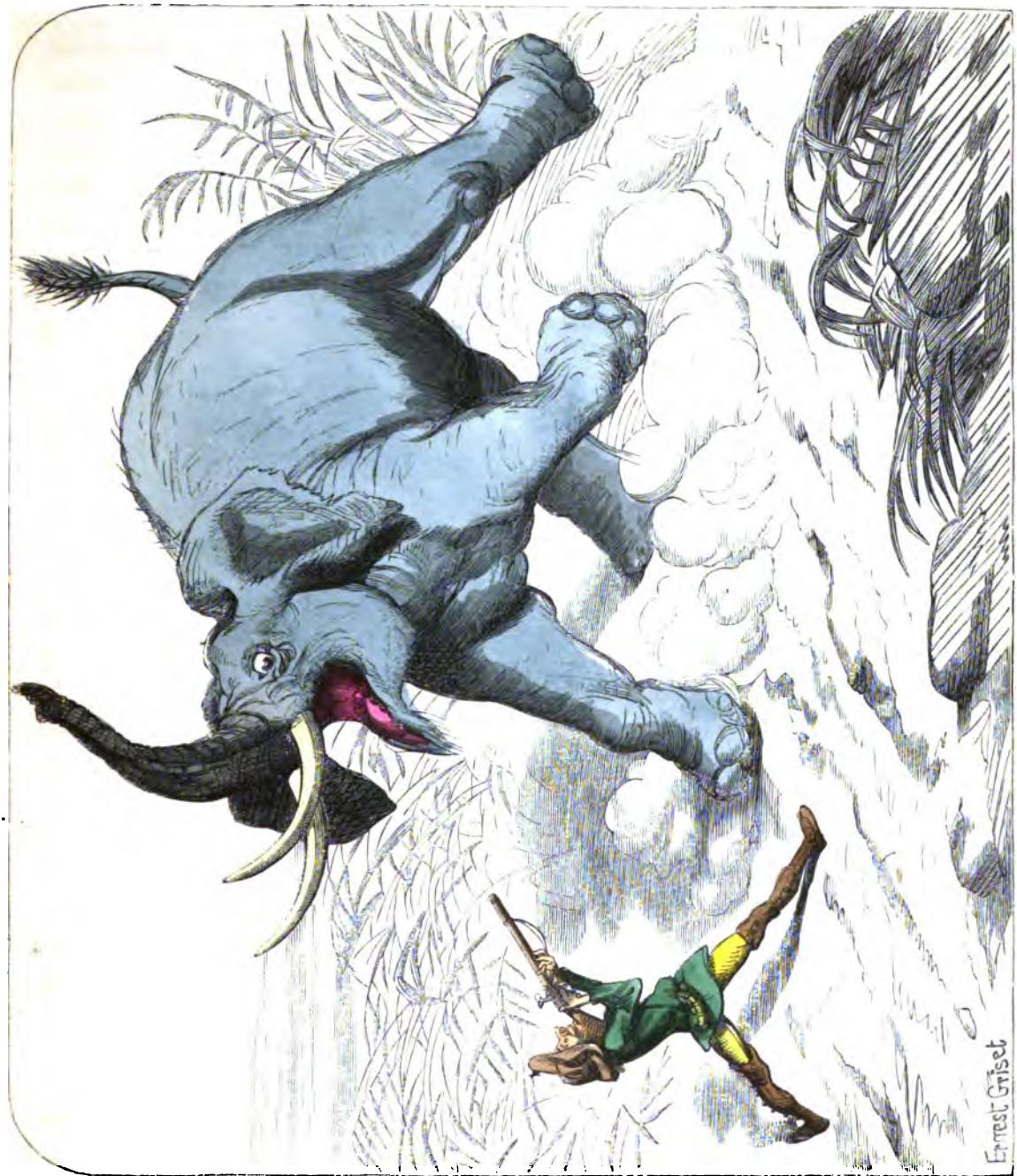
wooden-legged man compared with what it was when I heard the bull elephant behind me. I scarcely seemed to know that I touched the ground, and cleared tall mounds and bushes as easy as though they were three-foot hurdles. I ran faster than my pursuer, much faster, for by the time six or seven miles were covered, the crashing of the bushes in my rear was much less distinct than at first, and I began to entertain hopes that I should get off. But, alas! my wind began to fail me. I began to be conscious that I was breathing short, and every mile found me breathing shorter. My only hope was that *his* wind might be failing too. Delusive hope! I ventured to look back, and there he was, seemingly fresh as a daisy, steering by his trunk, which was pointed straight towards me, and by the aid of which I have no doubt he kept the scent.

“It was clearly no use my attempting to beat him at running. There was time for me to climb up a tree, of which there was an abundance in the neighbourhood, but I knew that the chances of my selecting one as favourable to my cause as that last hollow one were very remote; the best, the boldest, and the most manly course would be to stand at bay—to take my stand behind a tree, and when he advanced close enough, to step out and shoot him in some vital part.

“Promptly acting on the idea, I halted in the shade of a green monarch of the forest to fetch a little breath and nerve myself for the encounter. I had to make haste over both operations, for in about two minutes I could hear the tramp, tramp of his heavy feet as he came up at a long deliberate trot. In another quarter of a minute I could hear his breathing, and then when he had come to within ten yards of my tree, I stepped suddenly out and presented my piece.

“The result was not satisfactory. Seeing me, he opened his tremendous jaws to their full width, giving me a splendid chance to lodge a bullet in his very gullet; and doubtless I should have done so had it not been for a most unlooked-for and provoking circumstance. I am sure I thought that I had sufficiently sponged out the gun-barrels after the weapon had lain in the gory pool caused by that confounded old cow, but it seemed that I had not. Moreover, in sliding down the interior of that tree, the fine rotten-wood dust had filled the barrels, and was absorbed by the odious moisture that clung to them; the result was, when I pulled the trigger, not a brisk bang, but a flash and a squelching noise, and the propulsion from the gun of a sausage-like substance, that disappeared down the elephant’s throat without making him so much as wink.

“Barely had I time to observe this when I found myself tossed high in the air,









'THE ELEPHANT TOOK HIS "PIPE ON TALES".'

Ernest Griset

my cap and my gun flying from me; and casting my terrified eyes downward, all that was to be seen was a broad expanse of elephant's back, terminating in a tail fiercely upright, and with each of its bristles erect. A drowning man will catch at a straw, as you may have heard, brother Goliah; my case was quite as desperate as that of a drowning man, and there before me was something much more substantial than a straw.

"As I fell I grasped at it, and, thanks to the knobby tuft at the end, was enabled to retain my hold, bringing the huge animal to an immediate standstill. He had thrown me up, and he, not unreasonably, expected that I should come down again. That I *didn't* come down evidently caused him great perplexity, and for fully five minutes he walked round and round, grunting his amazement and with his piggy eyes turned skyward. It was plain that, owing to his immense strength, he no more minded me hanging on to his tail than though a bluebottle had settled there.

"'Confound him and his ugly snuff-box, the villain, where has he gone?' muttered he. 'I know I threw him up a good height, but he would have been down by this time if he meant coming down any more. P'r'aps he doesn't; if so, it is useless me staying here any longer. I'll trot back and comfort the girls.'

"But no sooner had he put out a hind-leg towards that purpose than he became aware of an impediment, and endeavouring to rid himself of it by whisking his tail, found that member immovable, and then the true state of affairs suddenly flashed to his mind.

"'Ho! ho! murderer of my devoted cow! so you are there, are you?' he exclaimed, lashing round with his trunk, which only missed me by an inch or so. 'Come down this instant, you insolent and malicious little animal, and feel the weight of my knees.'

"It wasn't likely. I held on the tighter when he told me to let go, and throwing up my feet, crossed them over the stump of the appendage, making it more difficult than before for him to shake me off. Finding it so, he grew furious. With an agility that seemed impossible in so huge a brute, he skipped and jumped and arched his back like that of an angry cat, so as to shorten the distance between his head and his tail, and enable him to grasp me with his trunk; and at first I really thought that he would have succeeded, as, although from the awkwardness of my position I couldn't see it, I could distinctly feel the thumb and finger of the curious thing fumbling to get a hold on the hinder part of my trousers. Suddenly I bethought me of a pin that, in lieu of a button, secured one of my braces; this I took out, and gliding my right hand behind me, gave his trunk tip a smart

scratch, on which, with a yell of pain, he instantly withdrew it and set off at top speed.

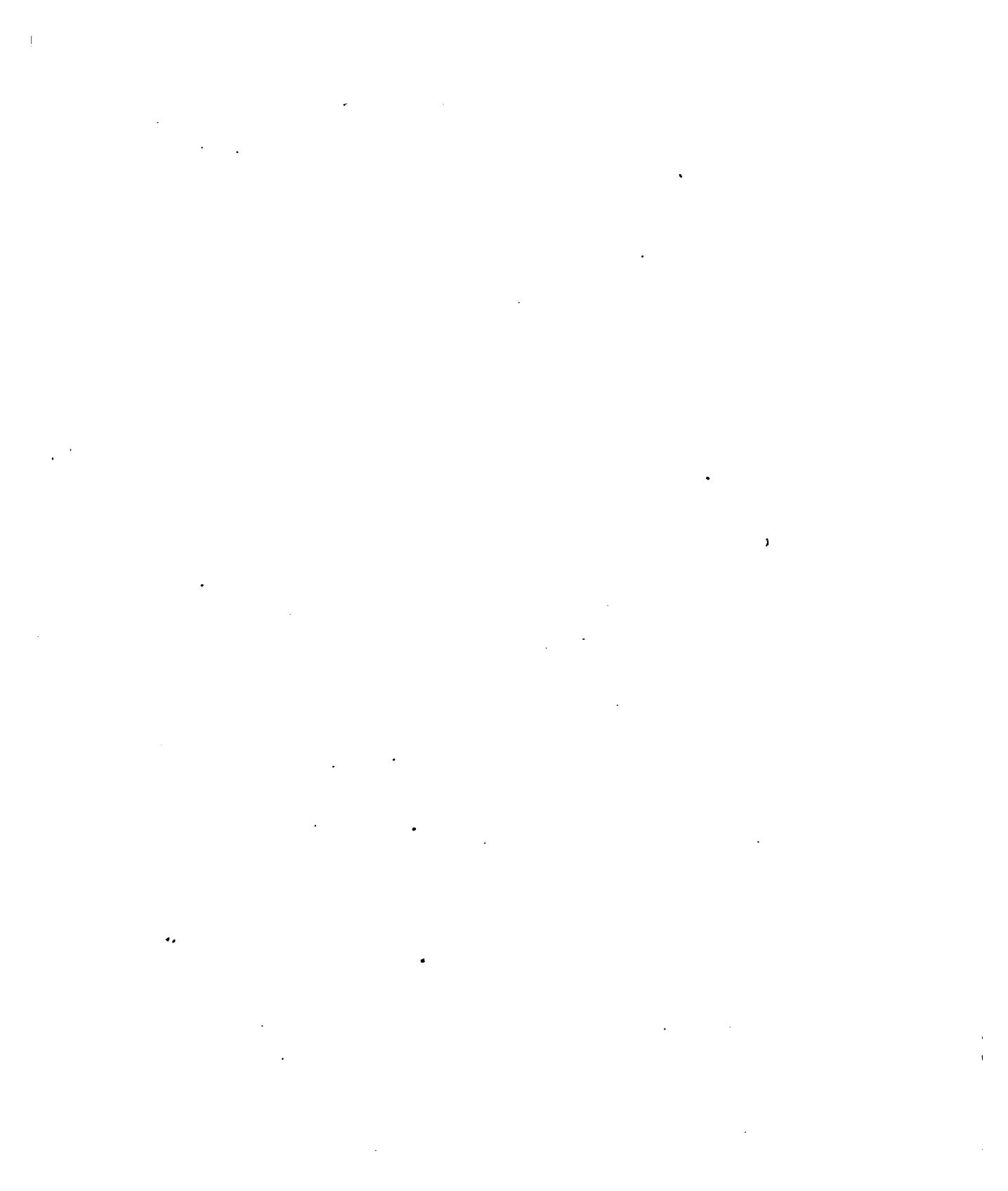
“I have heard a great deal concerning the endurance of the elephant, as I dare say you have, my dear brother, but of its real extent I believe no living man, except such as may have had the same opportunity of testing it as I had, has the least idea. As well as I can guess, it was between three and four o’clock in the afternoon when the old bull set off on his long swing trot, and, with slight intermission, he kept it up till that moment when I so unexpectedly made my appearance before you. Call it noon now, and that gives us twenty hours, and at, say, twelve miles an hour (fifteen would be nearer the mark, but I like to keep within bounds), two hundred and forty is the total of the miles I rode in such a singular way. At starting I set it down as certain that the animal would make straight for his herd, and beg the assistance of a friend to rid him of his encumbrance; but whether it was that the unaccustomed weight at his rear upset the balance of his reasoning faculties, or the many shocks coming after that great one, the startling death of his wife, had turned his brain, is impossible to say; probably the latter. Anyhow, he did *not* make for his herd, neither, as I could tell by taking particular notice of peculiar trees and rocks that we repeatedly passed, did he run in a straight line. He ran in a circle, with unvarying speed, giving evidence of his insanity by a loud trumpet shriek, uttered at intervals of about fourteen minutes.

“During the first hour of my singular ride my mind was in a continued bewilderment, and no wonder, since, while considering the best means of getting off, I was exerting all my ingenuity to hold on, which now became each moment more difficult in consequence of the creature’s hide, including, of course, that part of it which enveloped his tail, being bathed in perspiration of a very slippery nature. Soon, however, as I found that the tail remained faithful to its rigidity, and that there was no chance of its relaxing while the elephant’s fear lasted, I speedily altered my position by slewing round and bestriding it at the stump, and clasping it round, found it comparatively quite an easy method of riding.

“On he continued—on, on, till the sun set and the moon rose. ‘You’ll be dead beat, my friend, presently, and be brought to a standstill, when it will be easy for me to slip off and take to my heels,’ was the thought that comforted me hour after hour; but he never faltered. Outworned completely, I dozed off to sleep somewhere about midnight, and dreamt that we were boys again, Golly, and down at the old place at home and in the orchard, and you were swinging me up and down as I sat on the hanging bough of the old

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walnut-tree. Presently, however, you seemed to give the bough a savage bounce, and down I plumped into the pond where the horse-leeches were, as you recollect, Golly. This put an end to the dream, and opening my eyes with a start, sure enough I was in the water up to my thighs—the elephant had taken to a river. As soon as I recovered from my fright, I looked about me and found that it was quite daylight, and that the river we were crossing was about a mile in width. ‘Now is my chance,’ thought I; ‘a mile’s swim won’t hurt me; here’s off, and thanky for my ride, master elephant.’ Easier thought than accomplished, however; the sudden shock of the cold water had given additional rigidity to the tail, and I was as tightly jammed between it and the animal’s buttocks as though in a blacksmith’s vice. I struggled with all my might, I pinched the tail, I even bit the tip of it, but the only effect was that he plunged about in the water until I was completely drenched, and squeezed me to that degree that it was a mercy that my fast had been so protracted.

“Reaching the opposite bank, although by this time he must have been afoot at least twelve hours, his vigour seemed not at all abated; indeed, the cold bath appeared to have refreshed him, and he set off again as hard as ever. If ever a man was sick of a ride, Golly, I was sick of that one. I was faint and hungry, and never so sore since that time at school when we got into trouble for putting snuff in the schoolmistress’s smelling-bottle. ‘I’ll make an end of this,’ said I between my set teeth; ‘I will if it costs me my life; since he has kept on so long, I see no reason why he shouldn’t keep on for a week, by which time I shall be starved and burnt up by the sun—it was blazing hot by this time—to a mummy. *How* was the question. He was still squeezing me as hard as ever, and though I now and then contrived by pushing the villainous tail away from me to obtain a half-minute or so of free breathing, no sooner did I leave go than it sprang back on me with a whack that instantly reduced my wind to its former distressed state. At last a brilliant thought entered my head—I would cut the tail off!

“I believe I have forgotten to mention it, but I had my hunting-knife with me, and whipping it out of its sheath, I felt its edge; it was sharp enough for ordinary purposes, but when I contemplated the indiarubber-like bar within my grasp, I had my doubts as to its efficacy, and for half-an-hour employed myself in whetting the blade on his buttock, till I had brought it to razor-like sharpness. Nothing then remained but to look out for a plain and soft-looking spot to fall on. At length I spied it. With one stroke the tail was severed—that tail, my good Golly, that has afforded us both such an excellent and abundant

meal—and here we are again, brother Goliah, sound in wind and limb, somewhat poorer, maybe, as regards worldly goods, but richer in wisdom. It was a mistake for us to part company, Golly; henceforth we will tread the adventurous path together!"

But I shook my head.

"What can two unarmed men do in such a country as this?" I replied. "One gun between us wouldn't be much, even if you could find the one you have lost. That isn't likely, however."

"I should know the spot again instantly if I saw it," replied my brother Eli; "there was a great crag of brown rock, shaped like a cocked hat, jutting out of the ground within a hundred yards of it; and closer still, a tall tree with seven naked limbs all pointing towards the east, each one straight and striking out like the prongs of a fork. There was a blue bird with a purple head sitting on the fourth fork, as I well remember noticing when the bull elephant tossed me up in the air, bringing my head and the bird's to a level."

"I don't think the blue bird goes for much, Eli," I remarked; "it is a poor chance that he is sitting there now."

"It can't be expected, and I only mentioned it to show you how accurately I marked the spot. There may, it is true, be other cocked-hat-shaped rocks about, but I am prepared to swear by the seven forks of that tree."

At this point of Goliah Brass's narrative, Mr. Corker, who during the last ten minutes had sat uneasily in his chair, from time to time furtively sniffing towards the door, put in an observation.

"Scuse me, shipmate," said he, laying his hook on Goliah's arm, "but speaking of forks reminds me of knives and of the most common use both those useful weapons are put to when acting in harmony. I'm likewise reminded of another fact, shipmate, which is, that a dinner will spile through standing over much sooner than a yarn will. Beg pardon, gentlemen both," continued Mr. C. to us; "if I'm out of order I stand to be corrected."

Monsieur the artist and myself hastened, however, to assure Mr. Corker that he was *not* out of order, but that, on the contrary, his delicate hint was both reasonable and seasonable, and gave him great credit. Then, without further ado, we adjourned to where the mutton and capers were spread.

DIVISION III.

"BUT, as I put it to Eli, and as, no doubt, it occurs to you, gentlemen," continued Goliah Brass, as, later in the afternoon, we once more sat together to listen to his astonishing and interesting narrative, 'You may have a very clear recollection as to the appearance where you lost your weapon; but just consider, brother Eli, the two hundred and forty miles you travelled in so singular a manner after that.'

"'If you had paid proper attention you would have understood me to say that I had reason for supposing that that journey was performed, not straight ahead, but within a circle,' replied Eli. 'I should have told you, if I didn't, that I observed the same rocks, and banks, and gullies a dozen times over; and it wouldn't very much surprise me if at this moment we were not half-a-dozen miles from that part of the Gnashantearem where my gun is to be found. At least, there can be no harm in having a look round while the daylight lasts.'

"Of course I could have no reasonable objection to his proposal, so off we set. We climbed up on to the shelf of rock over which he had slid, and no sooner were we up there, than, to my surprise, Eli at once went on his hands and knees and commenced sniffing about like a sporting-dog. My first idea was, as I'm sure it would have been that of any gentleman present had he seen his brother in such an extraordinary position, that Eli's senses had taken leave of him, especially as when, following him up close, I repeatedly asked for an explanation, he made no reply, but went sniff, sniffing along as though his very existence depended solely on his sense of smell.

"'Pray tell me what you've lost, Eli?' said I. 'Perhaps I can assist you in finding it.'

"'Thank you,' he presently exclaimed, leaping cheerfully to his feet; 'I've found it for myself—see,' and he pointed to a dark, trickling sort of stain on the white rock.

"Now indeed the mystery was made clear. With the true instinct of a hunter, Eli had set himself to discover the track of the elephant he had wounded; though why he was so anxious to find it I had not the least idea till I made inquiry.

“ ‘I’ll tell you why, you simple fellow,’ replied Eli. ‘The most natural course of man and beast, when they find themselves in great difficulty, is to go home. That, I have no doubt, will be what my elephant did when he so suddenly found himself relieved of my weight.’

“ ‘But,’ said I, ‘if that is the case, why didn’t he hasten home when you were hanging to his tail?’

“ ‘Because,’ replied Eli, ‘while suffering under the injury, he was so exasperated as to be unable to think coolly on what had best be done; that was why he did nothing but run round and round; but, fagged and tired out, and benefited by the blood-letting he was indebted to me for, I have no doubt that he was instantly restored to his sober senses, and that by this time he is safe in the bosom of his family.’

“ ‘But, Eli,’ I remonstrated, ‘surely your experience of the tail of one of the family don’t make you eager to make the acquaintance of its entire bosom?’

“ ‘You’ll never become a hunter, Golly,’ laughed my brother. ‘Come along; keep your eye on that dark track, and I’ll warrant it lands us within a hundred miles of the lost gun.’

“ So we followed the trail up hill and down dale for several miles, until I began to think that after all Eli was wrong in supposing that he had done that two hundred and forty miles journey in a circle; it seemed to me that it must be straight ahead, and that the unlucky brute was retracing his steps the whole of the way. By-and-by, however, just as we were topping a hill, Eli’s hunter’s ear detected a strange sound, and he instantly signalled me to halt.

“ ‘Unless I am much mistaken,’ whispered he, ‘I hear the voices of elephants. It is lucky that the wind blows from them to us. Lay flat on your belly, Golly, like so, and let us crawl to the brow of this hill and peep over.’

“ We did so, and a sight immediately greeted our eyes that filled me with wonder, and, I am not ashamed to say it, commiseration. Before us, in a sort of hollow, was the elephant family Eli had hinted at, numbering, as far as the twilight and the distance would enable me to judge, about ten. There were young and sturdy elephants, and elephants grey, with the tips of their tails nearly bald of old age. There was a tiny baby elephant, with its mite of a trunk no bigger than a parsnip. They were gathered in a ring, and in their midst was the unlucky brute that had given Eli that long ride, and whose tail was that very instant entombed within us. If ever an elephant looked faint and unwell, that was the one.



“‘What! to see a dead man’s bones, Eli?’

“‘No; to secure a dead man’s gun,’ replied Eli, winking artfully. ‘I don’t suppose it’s of much account by this time; but it will perhaps be better than none if I am not able to find my own.’

“So we crept away together, and by a roundabout way reached the black clump of trees in about half-an-hour. Arrived there, little searching was needful to discover the object of our visit. There it lay on its face, whitening on the black rock, with not two sound inches from its neck to its legs; but the arms were perfect, and in one of the bony hands was still grasped a long gun, with a skeleton finger still on the trigger, while a few feet away lay an old-fashioned leather powder-flask, with the stopple still fast in the neck of it.

“Gently disengaging the piece from the unlucky hunter, Eli examined it closely, and, to his great delight, it proved to be little or nothing the worse for its long spell of idleness. The dryness of the atmosphere, and the hard and slanting rock on which it had lain, had preserved it almost in as good condition as when it was last fired. True, the outside of the barrel was rusty, but all that the lock required was a little oil to make it as serviceable as ever. Eli was further gratified to discover that the powder in the leather flask was in capital condition. It was a longish task to unscrew the stopple, which was a little rusty; but when this was accomplished, the powder could be poured out dry and sparkling as ground glass.

“‘This is a slice of luck I never expected,’ exclaimed Eli gleefully, as he slung the gun across his shoulder. ‘Now if we could find the gun I lost, we should indeed be set up. It would be hard if two young fellows such as we are, well armed, could not make our way. You wouldn’t have any objection to striking deeper into this wonderful country if we could find that other piece, eh, Golly?’

“To tell the truth, I began to be sick of the ‘wonderful country,’ and had no inclination to penetrate a foot deeper into it, and though, of course, I couldn’t be guilty of the meanness of leaving Eli in the lurch, I was not sorry that he, in his last observation, afforded me ground for making the question of retreating or proceeding a conditional one. There did not seem to me to be the remotest chance in the world of our finding the piece, so I replied—

“‘Ah, indeed, if we could find it, it would alter the case at once; *then* I should be only too pleased to continue our adventures.’

“ ‘ You would start with me at once, and without further delay ? ’

“ ‘ Of course I would.’

“ ‘ Then,’ said he, laughing and clapping me on the shoulder, ‘ we may start as soon as you please’ (I believe that the rogue had made the discovery when he at first began to speak of our going on), ‘ for yonder, unless I much mistake, is the identical cocked-hat-shaped rock I was speaking of ! To be sure it is, for now I look again I can make out the tree with the seven forks quite distinctly.’

“ The spot he indicated was a long distance away—two miles I should say—but in the light of the setting sun the objects mentioned were distinctly visible. Leaving the neighbourhood of the elephants, we hurried thither, and there, to Eli’s great delight (in which, in truth, I shared but modestly)—there lay the gun and the cap just as they had been tossed from him. All that was amiss with the gun was that in falling it had struck against a stone, bending the lock a little ; but five minutes’ tinkering set that right, and, preferring—although that belonging to the skeleton hunter was the superior weapon of the two—the piece he was used to, he handed me the other, together with the necessary ammunition.

“ ‘ What do you think ? ’ said he. ‘ Shall we push on at once, or shall we halt here and rest till morning ? ’

“ I was in for it, and there was no use in attempting to back out.

“ ‘ If we are to push on, the sooner we commence the better,’ I replied. ‘ Have you any idea, Eli, what sort of a country it is farther ahead ? ’

“ ‘ We will soon see,’ he answered, and taking from his breast-pocket a sort of map, he spread it out on the ground. After consulting it closely for a few minutes, ‘ We now are on the skirts of the great plain of Gnashantearem,’ said he, ‘ and there are two courses open to us. We may keep southward and find ourselves about this day week in the solitary marshes where the rhinoceros and the hippopotamus herd, or we may steer in a north-easterly direction, and get into the ostrich country. The only question is which is likely to yield most profit. Ivory is fetching a good price in the market, Golly, just now ! ’

“ ‘ So are ostrich feathers,’ said I eagerly, not at all relishing the idea of a hunting excursion amongst the tusked monsters. ‘ Ostrich-hunting is much the prettiest sport you may depend, Eli.’

“ ‘ As you please. I don’t know but that I have had enough of the heavy sort of game for one while, and no doubt it will be a relief to take a spell at the light

and fancy style of sport. Besides, to tell the truth, I am not in the best condition for a week's tramp after my long and hard ride. The ostrich grounds, according to the chart, cannot be more than twelve miles or so from this, and by putting our best legs foremost we may be amongst those gigantic birds by sunrise, and, if we have luck, I see no reason why we should not breakfast to-morrow morning on a grilled ostrich, sitting in the shade of a canopy made out of the bird's lovely and valuable plumage.'

"So we at once set off. It was then, I should say, about eight o'clock in the evening, and, guided by the evening star, we kept in a north-easterly direction for several hours. Gradually as we advanced the elevation of the country altered, the rocks vanishing and giving place to grassy slopes and the rich jungle and other verdure peculiar to these tropical parts. While it remained dark the quiet of the wilderness was frequently broken by the shrill and sudden cries of birds and beasts of night, but since the grey of morning had appeared, and the sun began to peep above the cloud-banks, the utmost stillness had prevailed. Presently, however, and as we were approaching a dense patch of bush, a peculiar sound was heard, not unlike the barking of a watch-dog. Such, indeed, I thought it was, and, turning to my brother, expressed to him my satisfaction that we were so near a human habitation, where we should probably be able to obtain that refreshment of which we were by this time in considerable need. But Eli laughed.

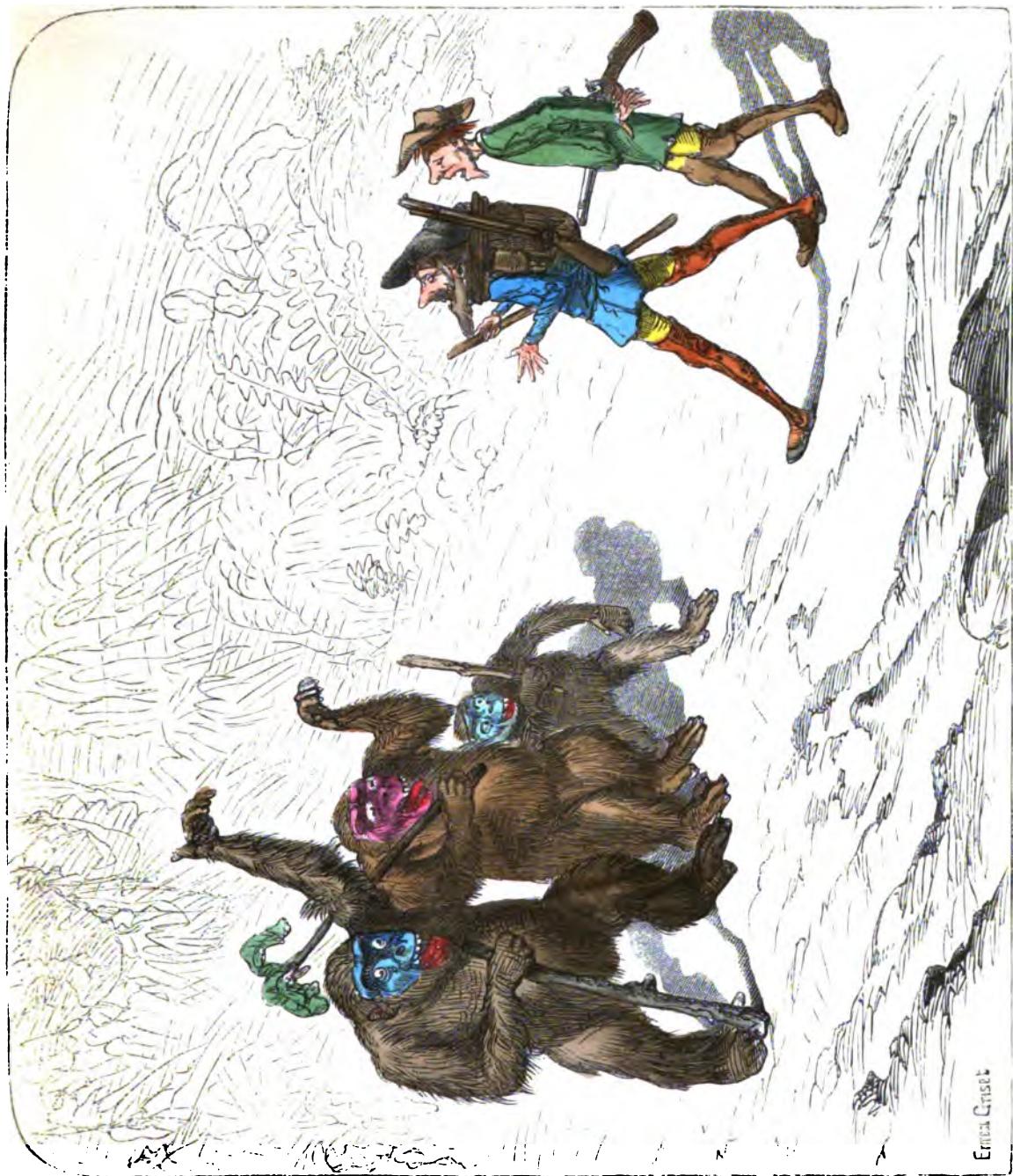
"'What you take to be the bark of a dog is the note of the ostrich,' said he. 'True, I never heard it, but I well recollect reading that the note of the bird in question is not at all musical, and as the noise we just heard exactly answers that description, there can, of course, be no doubt about it.'

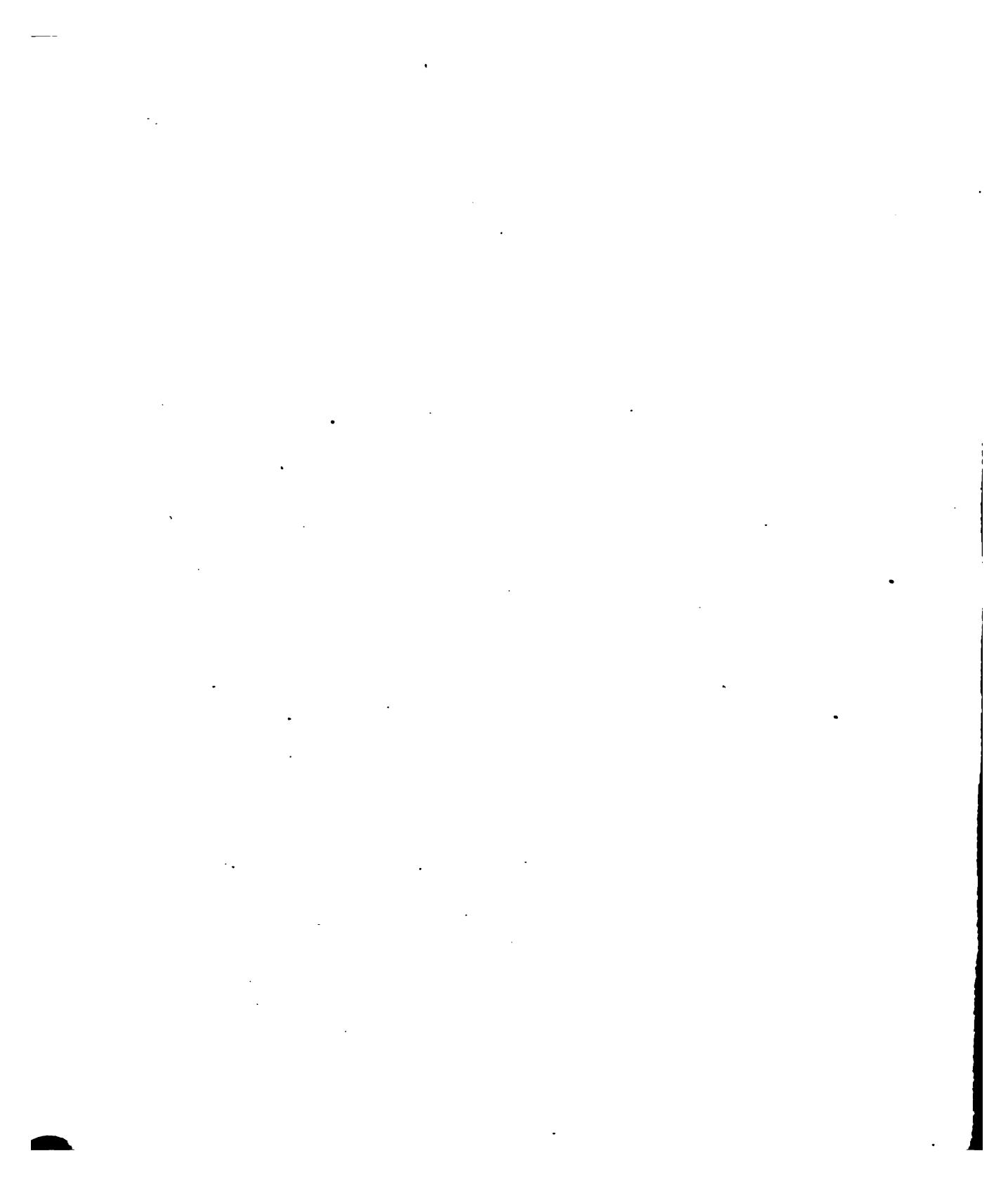
"But scarcely had he uttered these words when a second and a third bark joined the first, the three blending to make an uproar of the most hideous sort. Eli looked perplexed, and was brought to a standstill.

"'I should think that there was a biggish nest of 'em not far from here,' he whispered.

"So there was a nest of them, but 'they' were not birds, nor were they like in shape or visage to any beast it was ever my lot to have before seen. There were three of 'em—two big ones and a little one—erect on their hind-legs, and more hideous than any image of Satan. Their eyes were red and flaming, as were their nostrils, and their wide gaping mouths furnished every one with a set of teeth white as ivory and large as the tusks of an ox. They were hairy, these monsters, from their head to their heels, excepting their face, which was bare and of the colour of a boot blacked but not polished. They had hands

Enrico Crispi





shaped like human hands, and one of the big ones and the little one grasped a rough and heavy club threateningly, while the other big one (doubtless the female of the party), instead of a club, held over her head the tufted top of a palm sapling, by way, it seemed, of parasol.

“ ‘Good Lord, brother Goliah!’ whispered Eli, falling behind a pace or two (which I am sure he never would have done had not his nerves been terribly unstrung), ‘we have fallen amongst gorillas!’

“ Low as he whispered the words, however, the elderly male monster overheard them.

“ ‘ You have!’ roared he, beating his belly with his tremendous fist—‘ you have fallen amongst the gorillas, the kings of the forest, whose hatred to all other man-monkeys is only equalled by their powers and good-will to mash and smash them wherever they may be met.

“ ‘ Mash ’em! smash ’em!’ shrieked the hideous old she, shaking her parasol at us and champing her teeth with a horrible sound.

“ ‘ Mash ’em! smash ’em!’ piped the little imp, making a sudden skip forward and fetching me a sudden crack across the shin with his club that made me grind my teeth with pain. I had my maulstick in my hand, and was in the best mind in the world to make the little wretch feel the weight of it; but by an effort I restrained the inclination, and, bearing in mind how by tact and ingenuity I had manoeuvred myself out of the clutches of an animal even more formidable than either of these—to wit, the savage lion of the Great Wigglewaggle—I plucked up heart, and, putting on a pleasant countenance, observed—

“ ‘ Are we indeed so altered that you don’t know us again? Little did we dream when we set out to find you that we should meet with such a reception!’

“ This speech had the desired effect, inasmuch as it occasioned a parley.

“ ‘ Know you again! How should we know you again?’ fiercely demanded the old male, stopping short in his advance towards us and slightly lowering the club raised to brain us. ‘ Why should we know you again, eh?’

“ ‘ Did you never have a father?’ I inquired, fixing my eye on him and speaking in a tone slightly tinged with sorrow. ‘ Have you no recollection of the time when, no bigger than that sweet little creature—long and long before you met the image of female loveliness now at your side—you gambolled in the forest shade, protected by the strong arm of a loving parent?’

“‘What a nice-spoken wretch he is!’ murmured the vain old fright with the parasol; ‘pity he belongs to the hateful race one is bound to mash and smash.’

“‘Do I recollect those days?’ ejaculated the old male, looking puzzled; ‘of course I do, but what the dooce can *you* know about ‘em?’

“‘That parent died,’ I continued, boldly assuming that such was the fact.

“‘He did so,’ answered the monster in a husky voice, and for an instant turning away his head. ‘Poor old father! he’s been dead this six years.’

“‘Do you know what became of him?’ I asked impressively.

“‘What became of him?’ repeated the ignorant ape, scratching his head with the knob of his club, and looking each moment more bewildered; ‘the ants eat him where we buried him, I suppose—they always do.’

“‘And have you no higher opinion of your noble breed,’ I replied, venturing to speak in tones of severity—‘have you no higher opinion of the kingly race from which you sprang than to suppose that when a member of it dies there is an end to him? If so, you have yet to learn vastly different. He but changes to another shape, a more refined shape, and I have no hesitation in saying a handsomer. It is not near his old home that he appears in this new shape, but in a country thousands of miles away, and so proud is he of the great improvement that has taken place in him that he is ashamed of his ancient home and haunts, and nothing can induce him to revisit them. This, however, is the rule—there are exceptions. It sometimes, though rarely, happens that a member of the old race of forest kings yearns to the old home of his monkeyhood—to the familiar faces that adorn it. Behold in us two such rare exceptions! Behold in us your late father in his new shape, and your grandfather, who, after a great deal of persuasion, I induced to accompany me hither!’

“So saying, I pulled Eli forward by the sleeve (he was little less astonished than the monkeys themselves), and we both bowed patronisingly. For a few moments the gorilla stood quite dumbfounded in amazement, but presently he threw aside his club, and, with a roar that made me leap, sprang towards me and embraced me in his horrible hairy arms, while his good lady dutifully did the same to my brother Eli.

“For a moment I thought to be sure that my last hour was come, and that the monster was putting into execution his threat to mash and smash me. Nor was this fear without foundation; he squeezed me so hard that I could distinctly feel the buttons of my waistcoat denting my breastbone. Indeed, I much doubt, if I had not happened to have had my

artist's kit strapped to my back, and which he also included in his embrace, if the breath would not have been completely squeezed out of my body. The first words he uttered, however, reassured me.

“‘My long-lost parent!’ he exclaimed in a choking voice, ‘to think that we should meet again! To think that my foolish eyes should not at once have perceived your likeness, even in your new shape, to your old self! Snawtlesnag, come instantly, sir, and beg your grandpapa’s pardon for your attack on his dear leg! You will forgive Snawtlesnag, father; he is young and reckless, but, believe me, he is a precious monkey and your worthy descendant. Kiss grandpapa, sir, and tell him you are sorry.’

“And, to my great disgust, the imp dutifully leaped on to my shoulder, and putting his ugly head to my face, pressed his black lips to mine. Eli had fared little better than myself. In the extreme of Mrs. Gorilla’s affection for her husband’s grandfather, she had taken him babywise up in her arms and hugged him till he was black in the face.

“‘Have you come to stay a long while, grandfather?’ asked Snawtlesnag as I released myself from his embraces and set him gently on to the ground.

“‘No, little one,’ I replied, feeling much more inclined to twist the little brute’s neck than to talk civilly to it; ‘this is only a flying visit. I have merely come to see you and show you some pretty things I have learnt to do in my new shape in the other country, and then we must get back, as I find that there is something in the air does not agree with your poor great-grandfather.’

“‘You are right,’ observed Eli, who had scarcely recovered from the terrible squeezing; ‘make haste, my dear son, and show the dear creatures what you have brought them.’

“As he said this he regarded me with a queer expression, as though wondering in what way I intended to fulfil my promise. But this I had settled in my mind before I made the suggestion. I don’t know whether I before mentioned it, but when I took the likeness of the lion which so displeased him, thinking it a pity that the canvas should be entirely wasted, I rolled it up and stuffed it into the breast-pocket of my coat. Suddenly whipping the likeness out, while the ugly trio stood in an expectant row before me, I unrolled and revealed it to their astonished eyes. The effect was startling. Soon as the female beheld it, she caught up her cub, and shrieking ‘The lion! the lion!’ fled for her life, while the more courageous male knitted his dreadful brows, and catching up his club, assumed a position warlike and terrible.

“‘This is one of the things I have learnt to make,’ I remarked in a calm and reassuring voice; ‘it is the portrait of a lion we have kicking about at home.’ And I fluttered the canvas to convince them that there was nothing to fear in so flimsy a thing. Seeing it was so, the female and the cub came back again, she blushing and looking ashamed of her foolish alarm.



GOLIATH BRASS IN THE ACT OF BAMBOOZLING HIS RELATIONS.

“‘Kicking about, eh?’ observed the he gorilla, looking glum; ‘I didn’t think that anybody dared to kick lions about!’

“‘Dare indeed!’ I replied lightly; ‘I’d like to see the lion that I wouldn’t dare kick. But how do you like the portrait?’

“‘It’s wonderful—it’s like life itself,’ said the she, approaching it timidly, and quite afraid to touch it. ‘Pray how did you make it?’





GOLLUM COMMITTING TREASON. THE MASTER GORILLA TO CANVAS. ERIC HEARTLESS TREACHERY.

“‘I could make you understand easier by showing you than by entering into a long explanation,’ I replied; ‘how would you like me to make you a portrait of little Snavtlesnag?’

“‘How would we like it? we should be delighted,’ answered both the imp’s parents in a breath; ‘it would indeed be nice. When we looked at it we should think of his changed grandfather who came such a long way to see us.’

“‘Very good,’ said I, ‘then it shall be done at once;’ and with that I unstrapped my kit and stretched a canvas, and Snavtlesnag striking a posture, the task was commenced. I set about it with spirit, for I plainly foresaw that if I succeeded in pleasing the ignorant creatures we should have no difficulty in getting away from them, which was then, as it is now in my opinion, all that we wanted to do. Eli, however, was not quite of that way of thinking. He was to the very marrow of his bones a hunter, and found it impossible to resist the temptation to make game of every savage animal he encountered. He itched to do so now. I declare, on my word of honour, had I guessed his intention I would have balked it, but I did not know it—I never dreamt of it. I had set him to grind me a little rose-pink, and he was kneeling just behind me, intent, as I thought, on the job. No such thing. He was loading his piece, and, sudden as a thunderclap, I heard a mighty explosion, and looking about saw the she gorilla sprawled on her back on the one side and Eli’s gun smoking on the other!

“‘Run, Golly! run for your life!’ he cried, at the same time springing to his feet and leading the way. Scarcely, however, had we run a dozen yards when the same hideous barking we had at first heard, only ten times more furious, assailed our ears, and glancing hastily over my shoulder, there I saw the old male and his imp, with their teeth bare to their jaw-hinges and their eyes starting from their heads, leaping over the ground and making after us at a tremendous rate.

“My heart was good to give Eli a sound rating for bringing this new peril on us, but I had not a whiff of breath to spare. We were both good runners, as we had need to be, for the old gorilla was on his mettle, and as fully determined to catch us as we were to escape; indeed, it was his reckless ferocity in this respect that helped to get us out of the difficulty. He was swifter even than us, but not so sure-footed as to his hind-legs. Had he been at liberty to run on all-fours we shouldn’t have stood a shadow of a chance; but to do so he must have dropped his club, and that was a thing only to be parted with with his life. Once on looking back we saw that he was trying all-fours with the bludgeon in

his mouth, but after he had once or twice been sent flat backwards in consequence of both projecting ends of the weapon striking against two of the closely-planted trees, he returned to the perpendicular, frequently tripping and stumbling, but each time renewing the chase with more hideous noise and headlong speed than before.

“ After an hour or so of this sport we got clear of the forest, and found ourselves on a broad open plain of a sandy nature, and into which at every step our feet sank ankle-deep. Here we thought it was all over with us, for the gorillas being more nimble than we were, and lighter afoot, scarcely sank in the sand at all, and gained on us each moment. We could hear the old brute talking with his son and encouraging him to come on, as the two white men-monkeys would now shortly be run down, and mashed and smashed in their blood.

“ ‘I am afraid we must yield,’ panted Eli, who was a yard or so in front of me; ‘if we could make a stand we might be some sort of match for the monsters, but for my part I am sure that if I cease running I shall go down like a log, and there will be an end of the business.’

“ ‘I am in the same state of distress, brother Eli,’ I replied, and not without perfect truth, I assure you, gentlemen; ‘but look ahead, Eli—is not that a tree? If we could only gain that, and climb into it, and make ready for shooting by the time they came up, we might balk them yet.’

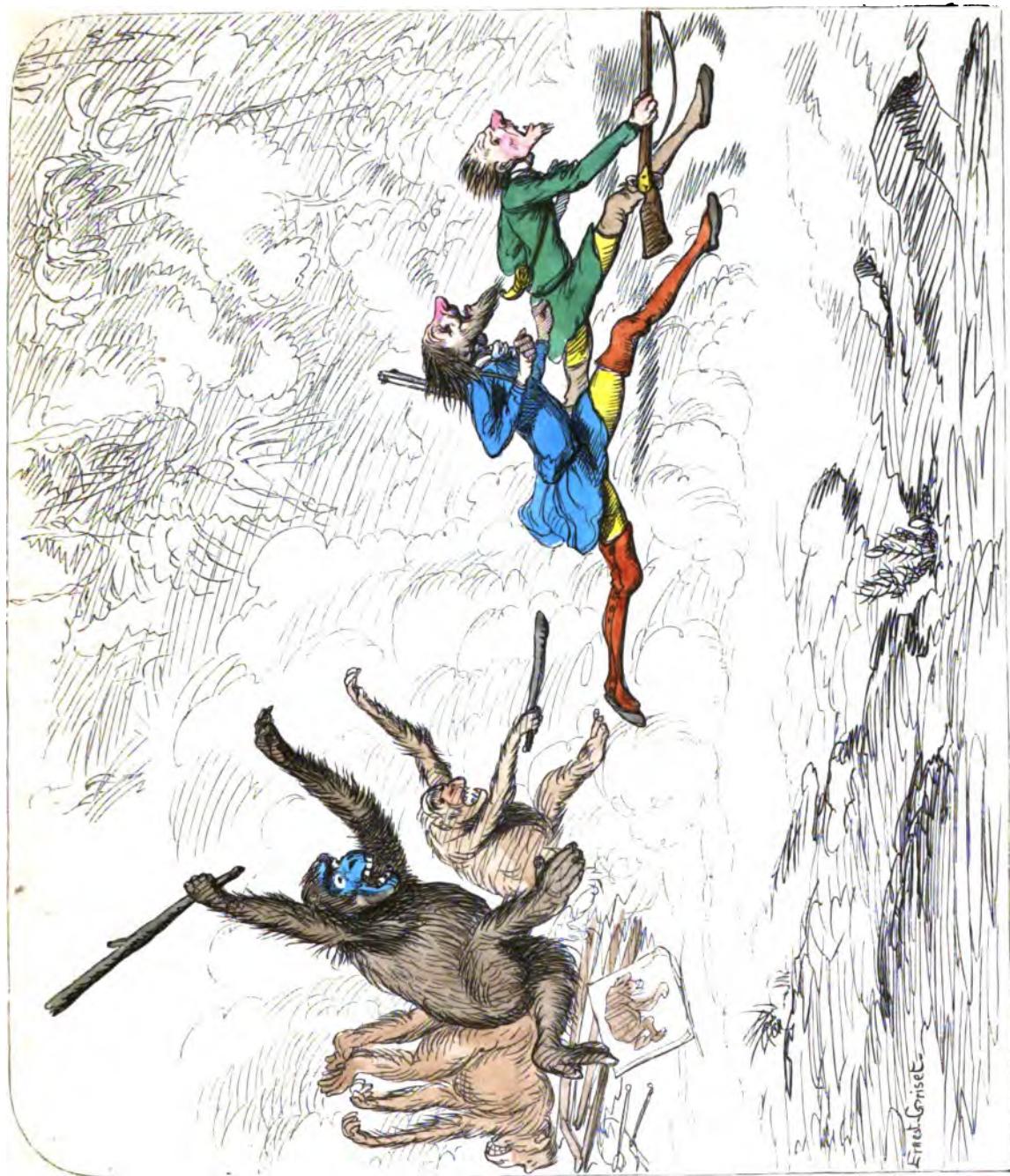
“ ‘It is a tree, but it is a very stumpy one,’ he replied; ‘it is one of those dwarf palms with feathery leaves. Come on, Golly.’

“ Encouraged by the faint gleam of hope the tree inspired, we put on a fresh spurt of speed, and approaching the tree (or rather trees, for now that we came close up we found that there were two stems), leaped into them. Eli was still a little ahead of me, so that by the time he had made two bounds and reached the top I had only made good my hold on the other stem.

“ As I thought; but judge of our astonishment when suddenly the ‘tree’ uttered a screeching sort of cackling sound and began to move. It was lucky that I had taken firm hold on what I supposed was the trunk, for in an instant I found the confounded thing flung violently in a backward direction, and then again forward with the same velocity.

“ ‘Eli! I cried, ‘the tree’s alive! Lord send I was out of this enchanted country!’

“ ‘It isn’t a tree at all,’ replied my brother in a gleeful voice—‘it is an ostrich! Stick fast, Golly; I’m all right up here. Hurrah! let the man-devils catch us now if they can!’





"It was very astonishing, but not the less true. It *was* an ostrich we had so strangely hit on. As is the habit of those strange creatures, as perhaps you may have heard, gentlemen, he had buried his head in the sand when we at first saw him—alarmed, no doubt, at the approaching hubbub, and desirous, according to his silly notions, of avoiding it. How astonished he was to find himself thus converted into a beast of burden we could guess from



THEY ARE BEFRIENDED BY AN OSTRICH.

his terrific speed the moment he was sufficiently roused to understand the true state of the case. It was very well, however, for Mr. Eli to shout 'Hurrah!' comfortably seated as he was on the ostrich's feathery back, but with me it was woefully different. With the regularity of a pendulum the long left leg of the ostrich swung to and fro, of course carrying me with it. The worst of it was I had not high hold enough to admit of my feet clearing the ground at each of his gigantic strides, so was compelled to time my motions by

his, and so contrive that my toes touched the ground when his did. It was impossible to continue much longer holding on so. True, before we had made the acquaintance of the ostrich for five minutes, all sound of the pursuing gorillas was lost ; but to be worn down to the knees by being dragged and floundered across a stony desert was scarcely preferable to being brained by a gorilla's club. I called out and told Eli so.

“ ‘All right, old fellow,’ replied he in the best of spirits ; ‘have a little patience, and I'll find a horse for *you* in a few minutes !’ And as he spoke I heard him unslinging his gun from his shoulder. I knew that Eli had no cap to his head, and that the sun was blazing down fit to singe the wool of a nigger. It was different with me ; inconvenient as was my method of riding, it was at least cool and shady, for the swinging of the ostrich's long leg created a refreshing breeze, while the plumage of his magnificent tail overhung and covered me with its shadow. ‘Poor Eli has got a sunstroke,’ I thought, ‘that accounts for his random way of talking.’

“ ‘What do you mean by finding me a horse, Eli ?’ I asked gently ; ‘there are no horses in this region that ever I heard of.’

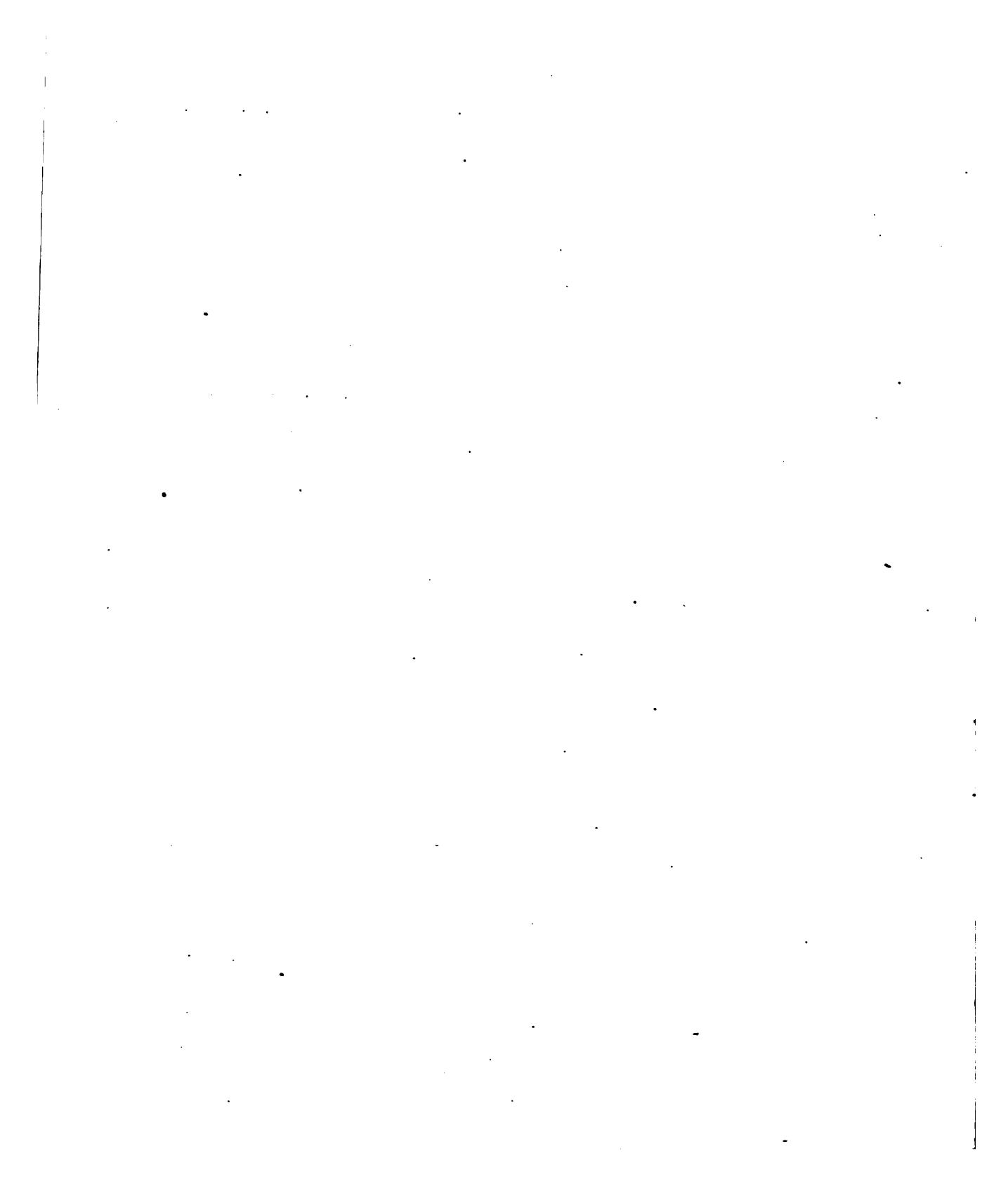
“ ‘If not a horse, something that will do quite as well,’ he answered. ‘I can see a sight, perched as I am up here, Golly, of a sort to make a hunter's heart leap into his throat. A great herd of giraffes, Golly ! We shall be amongst them in five minutes—slap in the middle of the herd—and then I'll give one a gentle tap on the head with the butt-end of my piece, just to confuse him and bring him to a standstill long enough to enable us to mount him, and then we'll be off again.’

“ ‘I should think we might stop now, shouldn't you, Eli ? I'm growing awfully sick of this journey.’

“ ‘You've come to the end of it, Golly,’ he replied cheerfully ; ‘we are nearly up with the giraffes, and you shall be on the back of one of them in a jiffy ! By jingo, though, how slanty the back of the giraffe is ! One of us must clasp him round the neck and the other hold on behind !’

“ And while he was speaking I could distinctly make out the tramp of a herd of animals of a large size. Next minute we were in the midst of a forest of beautifully symmetrical glossy legs and immensely long and tufted tails. ‘Whoa, hoss ! ye-hoo !’ I heard Eli shout, and then I heard the dull sound of a blow, and then we—that is, the ostrich and a single giraffe and Eli and myself—were alone, the rest of the herd having scattered panic-stricken. Eli had executed the proposed plan in his usual masterly style. Singling out his animal,





he had fetched it a clout over the head just hard enough to reduce its pace to a mere walk, and, being close alongside it, at a single leap he bounded from the back of one animal to the other, bidding me instantly leave go the leg of the ostrich and climb up on the back of the giraffe by aid of its tail.

“ Although, as I have mentioned, the giraffe was walking, this was no easy task to one who was so awfully stiff and bruised about the knees as I was. However, fearful that if I did not quickly accomplish the feat I should be left altogether behind, I made a vigorous effort, and next instant had Eli by the waist tight as wax. Only just in time, for, with a sudden lash of her tail, the giraffe recovered her senses, and, though carrying double, scampered over the plain at a tremendous rate.

“ But it seemed that my misfortunes as an equestrian were never to terminate that day. As Eli had remarked, the giraffe’s back was most awkwardly slanted, and altogether unfitted for sitting on. In this, however, Eli suffered little inconvenience, for he had his hands clasped about the animal’s throat and was secure enough—as, indeed, was I, unless the tails of my brother’s coat failed. But there was something else against which I had to contend altogether unlooked-for and unexpected.

“ I have spoken of the giraffe’s tail as a thing to be admired ; I had been on its back scarcely three seconds before I found woeful reason for altering that opinion. It was a beautiful tail enough, very long and tapered, and finished with a tuft of hair ; but it was also tremendously muscular and pliable, *and the animal had perfect control over it.* The first intimation I had of this fact was by feeling a sudden and startling sting between my shoulders, such as a carter’s whip might make, followed up by half-a-dozen other strokes dispersed over my body from my breech to the nape of my neck, including one that just reached the outer edge of my ear, fetching the blood, which I felt trickling down my cheek. The pain was excruciating.

“ Having thus at our command the means of escaping from an enemy who, according to my brother, was implacable in his hatred, and in the habit of pursuing his victim to death or himself dying in the chase—taking this fact fully into consideration, as well as another, that if I quitted the said means of escape there was strong probability that the terrible gorilla would overtake and batter me to a jelly—yet, lashed and excoriated by that scorpion-like tail, I had no hesitation—and so I expressed it to Eli—in accepting that alternative. Not labouring under the smart, my brother was opposed to quitting the giraffe,

“‘Loose one hand from me, Golly,’ he advised, ‘and lay wait for the tail and grasp it with all your might. If you can’t do that, keep your mouth open and lay your head back, and the next time she makes a slash as high as your face, bite at her tail-tuft and hold it.’

“There was sufficient ingenuity about the last bit of advice to recommend itself for trial, and I tried it. After enduring several cruel stripes about my lower parts, the brute at last made a higher slash, and I bit at the tuft, with effects that were little short of maddening; the hairs of the tuft were bristly and cut like penknives, added to which, my strength of jaw was unequal to the task of holding it, and no sooner had I got the tuft between my teeth than she whipped it out again along with two sound incisors, the loss of which, as you may perceive, disfigures my mouth to this very day.

“‘Eli! I cried as well as my distressed mouth would allow, ‘I can stand it no longer. Give my love to all my relations at Bristol. Farewell!’

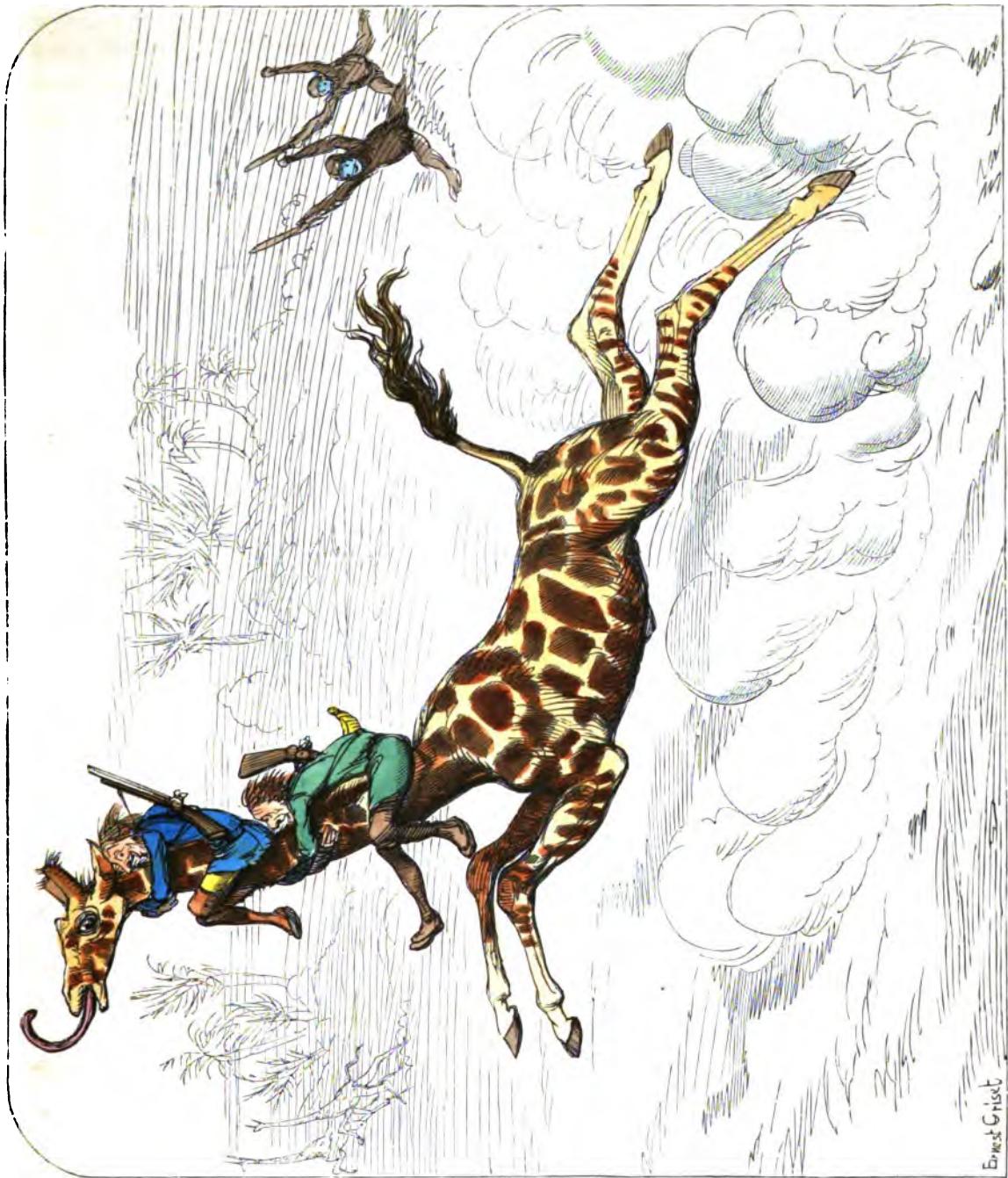
“‘If you could only bear with it another minute,’ said Eli, ‘p’r’aps matters may mend. There is a stream just ahead, and full in her path. Perhaps the poor beast is only irritable because she is thirsty. I will give her her head when we reach the water and let her have a drink. Courage, Golly; do hold out the little time I ask, and let us see what comes of it?’

“I did so. Although I felt that the terrible tail-tuft was cutting bits out of my coat and trousers at every lash, I pressed my lips together and uttered no sound. Next instant we reached the brink of the river, and Eli, giving the creature her head, as he said he would, at once found ‘what came of it.’ With a sudden flounce up went her hind-quarters and down went her neck, and in an instant Eli and I found ourselves landed on the ground, while the giraffe, well rid of her burden, turned short round, and—lucky for her—before Eli could regain his senses and grasp his gun, was out of rifle-range.

“At first my brother was inclined to vent his anger on me for putting it into his head to give the giraffe a chance to serve us as she had; but when I exhibited to him my damaged ear and mouth, and the tattered condition of my apparel, he was at once appeased, and apologised for his harsh remarks.

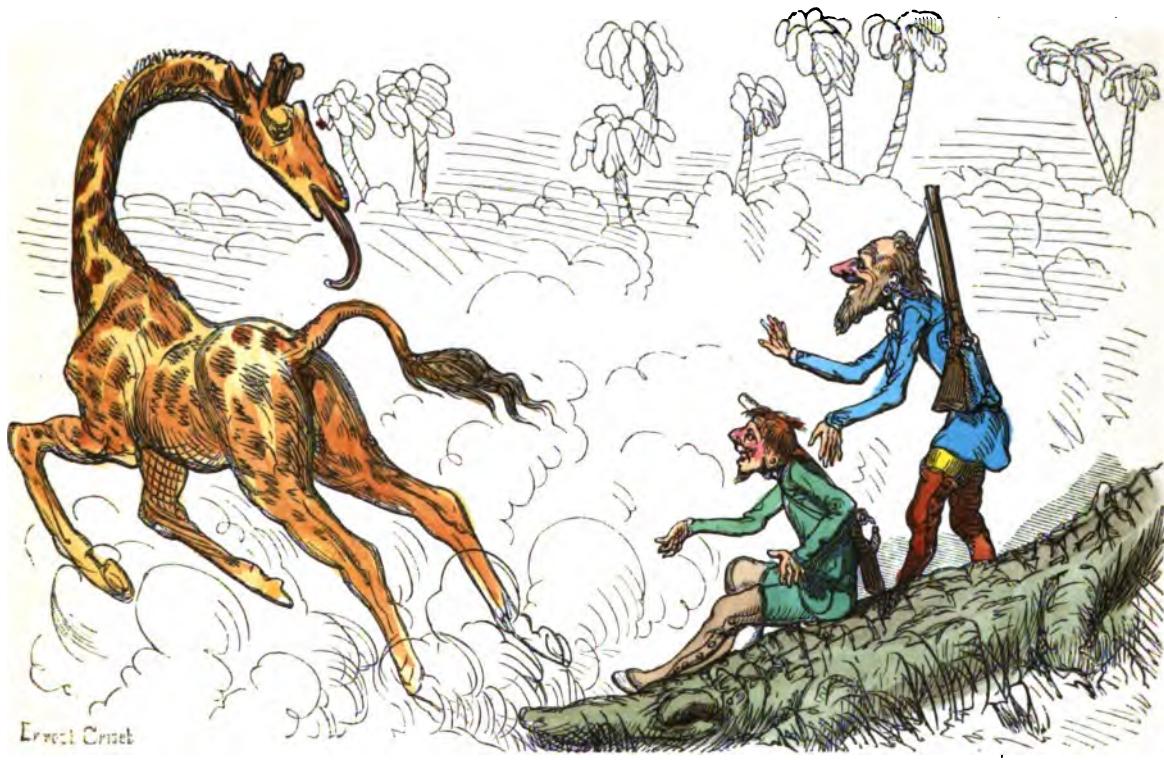
“‘There is no use in regrets, however, my dear Golly,’ said he; ‘what has happened can’t now be avoided. Let us come and sit down on this log, and try and find a way to mend matters.’

“The log in question lay just beside us at the edge of the river—for such, seemingly,





it was—so close to the edge, indeed, that sitting on it we could let our feet rest in the cool water—a perfect luxury after these many hours' scorching over the burning sands. It was not an inviting seat, being rough and gnarled, and in appearance as though it had passed many years alternately adrift and ashore. However, it was something raised above the flat ground, and so down we sat on it, unslinging our guns, and otherwise divesting



UNHORSED AND WATERLOGGED.

ourselves of encumbrances, that we might the better enjoy the cool breeze that blew off the stream.

“Here we sat for the space of an hour, I should say, discussing this plan and that; but into the nature of the said plans it is not in the least worth while to enter, for the simple reason that, owing to a queer and startling discovery, not one of them could be carried into effect. As I lay extended at the thin end of the log, Eli being at the other, I took a whim

to carve my name in the wood, as a sort of memento of our visit to a country productive of so many wonders, and for the purpose borrowed Eli's hunting-knife, which was a thoroughly good Sheffield blade, firm in the haft and strong at the point.

"From its appearance I had expected to find the wood tough, but not so tough as it was. The rough bark was as hard as ivory, and the best I could do was to scratch it tolerably deep. There was no need of hurry, so I did the name in old English characters, nicely flourished—'Goliah Brass, July 20th, 18'—when just as I was about to make a cross-stroke for the following figure, which was 4, the point of the hunting-knife slipped between a crack in the bark, and was instantly lost up to the hilt!

"The sudden surprise was not a little startling, but not one in a hundred compared with that which immediately followed. Grasping the knife by the handle, I attempted to tug it out again, when, without a moment's warning, the thin end of the log, on which I was sitting astraddle, was heaved up violently, dislodging me and causing me to throw a complete summerset over Eli, who sat at the thick end of the log, and who, overcome by fatigue, was dozing. When I say I was thrown completely over him, I am two inches within the truth, the said two inches being about the measure of my boot-heels, which came with considerable force against Eli's nose.

"Furious with rage, and not knowing for the moment from what direction the assault had come, my brother leaped to his feet and seized his gun that lay handy, while I, equally amazed and in the dark as to what was the matter, took up the other gun and prepared for the attack, as we both thought, of an enemy lying in ambush. The log was some sort of vantage-ground, and so we remained mounted on it. Judge of our amazement, however, when we discovered that the log began to move—to utter strange and hideous noises—to turn about so that its thick end was turned towards the water—to plunge into the water with a tremendous grunt, and a sudden wriggling splash that nearly capsized us!

"It was a mercy that we were not capsized! Had we been, we should have found an early tomb in the maw of a horrible crocodile!

"Such was the animal we had taken to be a log, and which had encouraged us in the supposition by his quiescence, until I, by that unlucky slip over the figure 4, put him out of patience. There could be no mistake about it, for as soon as he found himself immersed in his native element he no longer concealed his true nature; his eyeballs glared, he lashed with his tail, and champed together his tremendous jaws.

"At first the monster was but slow in his movements, and had we chosen, we might

easily enough have leaped ashore, or, at worst, have got off with a ducking; but by the time we had become fully alive to the extent of our danger the ravenous beast was far out into the deeps, chafing and wriggling, and trying his hardest to dislodge us. In my ignorance of such matters I was about to adopt what seemed to me the most feasible course, when Eli laid his strong hand on my shoulder.

“‘Are you mad, Goliah?’ said he; ‘what is it you would do?’

“‘Simply jump overboard and swim ashore,’ I replied.

“‘You foolish fellow; and do you imagine that he would let you? Are you not aware that as soon as he heard you in the water he would turn round on his own axis, or whatever it is that answers the same purpose, and snap you in two before you had taken half-a-dozen strokes?’

“‘I was not aware of it, Eli,’ I replied; ‘what, then, are we to do? We can’t stay here, that’s certain.’

“Eli shrugged his shoulders. ‘I only hope we may be able to,’ he observed; ‘it’s our only chance. The river must have an outlet into the sea somewhere, and when he gets as far, maybe we may have the good luck to spy a ship that will rescue us.’

“‘But he will never reach the mouth of the river while he keeps turning round and round in this manner.’

“‘You shall measure him for a bit and bridle, Mr. Harness-maker, before we venture out with him again, and then we shall be able to turn him about and guide him as you please.’

“I don’t suppose that Eli really meant anything more than a joke by these words (though, indeed, we were in no condition for joking). The fact is that, when a lad at Bristol, I served a little time with a harness-maker, from whom I ran away on account of his hasty temper and his intemperate handling of the strap on such occasions; but somehow his allusion to the subject at such a time nettled me. It did more—it set my ingenuity on the rack to think of a means by which the crocodile might be guided, and, sudden as such inspirations invariably visit us, the said means were presently made apparent to me. Instantly I acted on the happy thought. I have told you that in the first instance I was pitched over Eli’s head from the thin part to the thick—which, of course, was the neck—and there I remained, close up, so that by reaching down a little I could feel the corners of his mouth where there were no teeth. Eli sat with his face to the monster’s tail, and, without a word to him, I took my gun in hand by the shoulder-sling and waited

for the crocodile to once more open his mouth, which he did to its fullest extent, about twice in each minute. Hitting the exact moment, I stooped forward, and casting the loop over his snout, pulled back with a sudden jerk, and there he was, beautifully bitted and bridled.

“ ‘I have taken his measure for the bit and bridle, and brought it home, Eli,’ said I quietly. ‘See how it fits him.’

“ Eli was sensible to the mild rebuke; tears stood in his eyes as he silently embraced me.

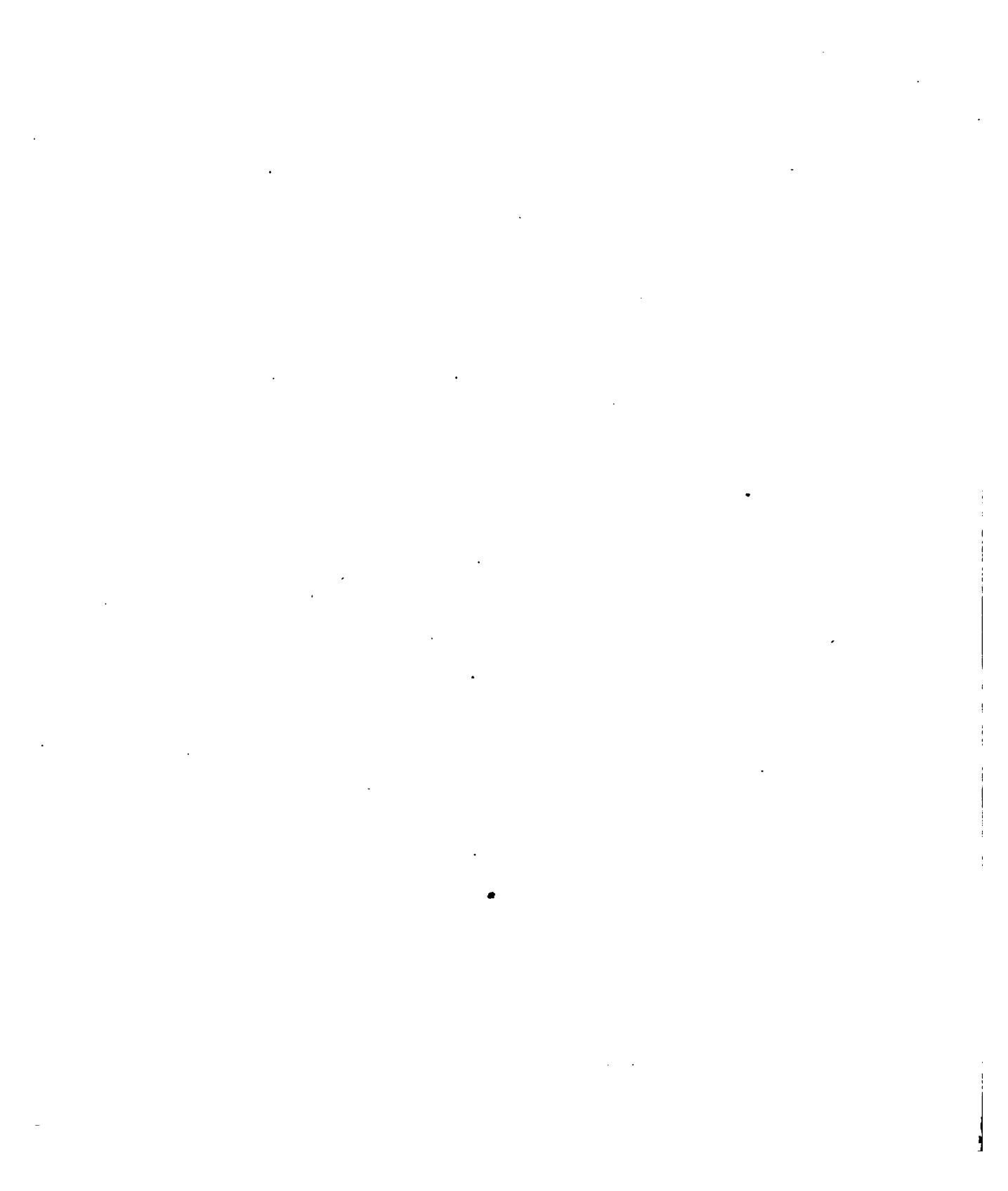
“ The bridle worked admirably. For the first few minutes the crocodile was somewhat restive, and tried hard to bite the iron barrel in two; but this was impossible, for I held him well in hand, pulling the bit so tight up to the back of his mouth that he could not shut it. Evidently he was terribly frightened at this rough handling, and spanked through the water at a tremendous rate and in a straight line.

“ Nevertheless our peril was still considerable. Rivers in this part of the world are enormously long, and travelling even at the rate he was, it might take several days ere we reached the sea, by which time we should certainly be starved to death. As the evening gave symptoms of approaching, this thought made us both rather melancholy. But the luck that all along had been so good to us did not now desert us. Just as we were passing a creek in the river, there suddenly shot out of it a long canoe with two Indians in it, fairly across the crocodile’s path; and no sooner did the animal perceive it than down he sank like a stone, leaving us at the surface, from which we were instantly rescued by the friendly Indians.

“ And there, gentlemen, I think I may say ended our adventures. True, we spent a few weeks with the family of the savages who picked us up, and who treated us with a kindness for which I shall ever bear them in grateful remembrance. But though it was queer and romantic enough to live on maize and turtle (in the art of harpooning which Eli made himself quite a name during the five weeks we remained there), and sleeping and living in a mud hut, after the prodigious and hair-breadth perils we had undergone, we found such a life calm and peaceful enough, and such as presented nothing particularly worth relating. At the expiration of the five weeks a palm-oil ship touched there, and in this we embarked, and so reached our native land.”



LAUNCH OF THE "CROCODILE."



T H E C R O C O D I L E - W I T C H .



T H E C R O C O D I L E - W I T C H.

IT was late in the evening ere Mr. Goliah Brass finished the relation of his and his brother's astounding adventures, and later still before, after but little pressing, he had executed, in the rough, sketches of the most striking events and occurrences connected with the same (the finished drawings that adorn this book are, the reader is assured, faithful reproductions from this genuine source). There was one picture that he could not sketch, and which, from a sense of delicacy, we should avoid printing, even though we were able to do so, and that is, a picture of his heroic self, as, glowing with gratitude and hot elder-wine, he stood with Mr. Corker on the frosty steps, wringing our hands and bidding us farewell. It was not often, he declared, that a despised and down-trodden man got hold of a sovereign; and his only regret was, that its existence with him would of necessity be so much shorter-lived than his kindly remembrance of the givers.

"I hope," exclaimed Goliah Brass, as for the fortieth time he took the shining piece from his waistcoat-pocket, and regarded it affectionately as it lay on his open palm—"I do most sincerely hope that the gratitude that now fills me to overflowing" (here he wiped his eyes) "may not dwindle as my poverty insists that thou shalt, poor little coin! Ah, gentlemen! it may seem weak, foolishly sentimental, in one of my condition, but if you only knew how much I should like to keep this golden piece unbroken and just as it now is for the little space of a week—four—three days even! It would do me good, I'm sure it would. It would be like a twinkling, watchful eye—a tender eye, full of kind regard, urging me to take heart and face my misfortunes and fight them manfully, rather than allow them to ride over me and oppress me with their staggering weight!"

And singularly apropos, or by way of illustrating his meaning, as he concluded this touching speech, he lurched against the railings, and would probably have sunk down had not Mr. Corker come to the rescue with his hook, which he kindly hitched into the unlucky artist's waistband, and so upheld him, while he (Mr. Brass), moved to a flood of tears at such an unmistakable act of friendship, bowed over the ancient mariner, and wept copiously

into the depths of his three-cornered hat. I am an older man than my artist friend Monsieur G., and hold to the opinion that it is not always kind or politic to check such outbursts of emotion, but the kind monsieur was quite melted by the appeal of his needy fellow-craftsman, and withdrawing from his purse the further sum of three half-crowns, pressed them with many apologies on Mr. Brass, that he might at least for a day or so be spared the anguish of changing the pound he had earned; on receipt of which, regarding us with an expression that seemed to say, "I daren't stay here another moment—if I do I shall certainly be guilty of idolatry," he passed swiftly down the steps and out at our gate, his friend the mariner still keeping the firm grip he at first had made.

Mr. Corker at parting had little or nothing to say. He looked contented enough (as perhaps he had private reasons for being) and jolly enough, and he was lavish of nods, and indulged in many more than forty winks out of his solitary optic, thereby clearly betraying the fact that he was labouring under a sense of the importance of some business in which we were mutually concerned.

In fact, it was so. While Mr. Brass was engaged in making his rough sketches, Mr. Corker had beckoned me to the farther end of the room.

"How do you like him, captain?" whispered he; "*you're* a judge of what's a good story, I know. What do you think of his story?"

"It more than answers my expectations," I replied. "I am more obliged to you, Mr. Corker, than I can express."

"Ezactly. I thought you'd like him. I'm jolly glad now that I brought him instead of t'other one."

"What other one?"

"Didn't I mention him to you? Oh, yes, there *is* another one; but he's a black man; that's the wust of him."

"How do you mean the worst of him? If being black is the worst of him, I should like to hear the best of him. Who is he? What is he? What induced you to mention him just now? Is he a travelled black man with a story to tell?"

"Oh, yes, he's right enough in that way; he's got a story to tell, but—" And Mr. Corker chafed his nose with his hook and shook his head mysteriously.

"But what? Speak out, Mr. Corker."

"Well, it's this way." And he lowered his voice to the most cautious of whispers, and button-holed me to the extreme end of the room. He *has* a story to tell—a regler

tip-top story I should call it—and, what's more, he's got the skin to show in proof of it. Do you happen to know anything about alligators, cap'n?"

"Nothing at all."

"Not about their habits and customs and the precious artfulness of their ways?"

"I may have read about the animal, but really I have no recollection of its peculiarities."

"Oh! Well, if that's the case, there couldn't be any harm in your listening to what he's got to say," remarked Mr. Corker, with a twinkle in his eye. "A sharp gentleman like you might get edification out of him, where poor fellows like us, who aint got the wind of knowledge in us to winner the chaff from the grain, wouldn't."

"Well, Mr. Corker, if it is worth my while to listen to this nigger, it will of course be worth your while to bring him here. On that understanding you may invite him."

"Ah! that's the arkardness of it," replied Mr. Corker perplexedly. "I couldn't bring him here; he can't walk; he's got swelled feet, and aint had a pair of shoes on for months. Not but what he's a very respectable sort of person," Mr. Corker hastened to add, fearing, I suppose, that I should set down a nigger with naked feet as a vulgar and low-lived character. "It aint because he can't afford to buy shoes that he don't wear them. Bless you, no. He's got a pension for something or other for his bravery in destroying that alligator I was speaking of—so he says. He lodges with my step-daughter out by Deptford-creek. Got the parlours, he has, and werry nicely furnished they are. Brass fender and fire-irons, pictures on the walls, red curtains up at the winder—as nice as ninepence. It's worth a wisit, if it's only to see them pictures on the wall which tell of his adventures. P'raps it might be convenient for you to be dropping down that way, cap'n, one of these odd times?"

I agreed with Mr. Corker that it might, and fixed an early day when monsieur and myself would pay Mr. Marcus Brutus Midge (the black gentleman's name) a visit; and there was an end to our little private conversation.

On the evening appointed—a week from that on which we had the pleasure of entertaining himself and his friend Goliah Brass—monsieur the artist and myself took train for Deptford, and, after some little trouble, found Little Neptune-alley, the place that Mr. Midge honoured by inhabiting.

To our surprise and disappointment Mr. Midge was alone, Mr. Corker, as his step-daughter informed us, having had his liberty stopped for some infringement of the hospital rules. However, Marcus Brutus Midge expected us.

The ninepence to the brightness of which Mr. Corker had compared the chamber of the African hero must surely have been comprised in a new sixpenny and threepenny piece. It was more than bright, it was dazzling. The Kidderminster carpet on the floor glowed with red and green; the stencilled walls bloomed with dahlias, and roses, and hollyhock flowers; there was a fire in the grate, soaring several inches above the topmost bar, and with its jolly flame illuminating the brass fender and the brass fire-irons and the copper kettle on the hob; the sheen of two highly-polished copper candlesticks that stood on the mantelshelf was reflected in the chimney-glass; a silver hunting-watch, large nearly as a saucer, hung on a brass-headed nail on one side; and in an easy chair, covered with yellow chintz, reclined Marcus Brutus Midge himself, the monarch of all that was to be there surveyed. He was the most splendid nigger that human eyes ever gazed on. Atop of his white woolly head was perched a red velvet smoking-cap with a massive gold tassel. He wore a blue coat with gilt buttons, a yellow waistcoat, and white trousers; and his unlucky feet, bound about with a scarlet bandana, reposed on a stool covered in some stuff light blue in colour, and studded with brass-headed nails.

“Berry glad to see you, genelmen,” observed Mr. Midge, courteously raising his smoking-cap when his housekeeper had introduced us. “Berry proud and 'lighted to see at dis yer time, and ebery oder time, frens of *my* fren Mr. Corker. Berry great man, Mr. Corker, sar! Take seats, genelmen, please. Bring de rum, Sa-rah, and de sugar, Sa-rah, and don't forget to remember a lilly lemon.”

In a few minutes we found ourselves chatting with Marcus Brutus Midge as though he had been the most commonplace person breathing.

“ ‘Taint often I have genelmen—real genelmen—come to see me,” observed Mr. Midge as he mixed his tumbler, “but dat ar don't trouble dis child. He's got much too biggerer a mind to tink hisself slighted. Look at de Monniment! Berry few folks go to see de Monniment. Why so? Kas dey grows familyar wif it. But if dat ar Monniment should tummel down one dese yer days! golly! den dey run to see um, I reckon! Wal, dat's like me, dat Monniment is. Everybody know me; everybody cock-sure dat dere *is* great nigger to be seen in dese yere parts, and dat's why dey don't trouble um to come. But when Ise buried! Laws bress Ratcliff and de mob a-chokin' up its streets on dat ar day, eh, sar?”

“I shouldn't wonder,” I ventured to reply in answer to the old gentleman's very modest estimate of his fame and popularity; “nevertheless I'm ashamed to confess that until your friend mentioned your name to me, I never before heard it.”

Marcus Brutus Midge stared towards us, showing every bit of the white of his eyes in the extremity of his astonishment.

“Did you never hear ‘bout ‘George and de Dragon?’” asked he with the slightest possible sneer in his tone.

“Yes, indeed; every Englishman is acquainted with that romance.”

“Well, sar, and yet you no hear of Mungo Midge—dat ar was de name I went by in dem times—and de alligator? Umph! genelmen tell the trufe, dere’s no sort of manner of doubt; but if ever I saw a t’ing ‘veloped in de hatsomspear of national jealousy, it ‘pears like to me it’s dat ar last ‘sertion of yours, sar. Scuse me, sar.”

And in a terrible huff the irate African drowned his indignation in a long draught of rum-punch. Mildly but firmly I repudiated the weakness he so broadly hinted at, and in my defence urged the fact of our hurrying to make the acquaintance of a man so famous as soon as we were informed of his existence. After several heavy doses of compliment and flattery, the bumptious old nigger consented to be mollified.

“Wal, wal,” said he, “since you neber heard dat story of de alligator, I should be a-wantin’ in my duty to my white men and brederen if I turned crusty kas of trifles, and wouldn’t relate it to ye.” So saying, he took up the brass-mounted poker and tapped on the hearth with it, at which signal the housekeeper appeared.

“Sa-rah, take dem ar keys, and bring it in here. Keerful, mind yar. May I ask you, genelmen bofe,” observed Mr. Midge, “what was de most striking t’ing as struck you as you entered dis yer humble parlar?”

The most striking thing was the brilliance of the wall-stencilling, and casting a glance that way, I was about to say so, but monsieur the artist was before me.

“What struck me most forcibly as I entered the apartment,” said he, “was the pictures yonder. May I be permitted to examine them?”

“No doubt of it, sar,” replied Mr. Midge, betraying in his tone that monsieur had just hit the right nail on the head. “Dey’s wuf while de examinin’ of any genelmen. Dey tells de story, sar, of an adventure, sar, dat puts George and his dragōn nowar, sar! You’ll parceive, sar, but two figgers in dem picters—de alligator and anoder genelman. I’m de noder genelman, sar!”

And Marcus Brutus Midge trumpeted loudly on his nose with a bandana similar in colour and pattern to those which enveloped his gouty toes, and pulled up his already high shirt-collar. The effect of the pictures alluded to on the vision certainly was startling and

imposing in the extreme, and I have no doubt that our involuntary ejaculations afforded Mr. Midge much gratification.

“Painted from nature, I presume, sir?” said monsieur the artist.

“Yes, sar, natur’, ‘sisted by memory and ‘imagination; nothing else, sar.”

“I perceive,” said I, “that since that time you have eschewed the savage, and, I should say, extremely inconvenient, custom of wearing a nose-ring.”

“Never did wear nose-ring, sar,” replied Mr. Midge with dignity. “Dat ar is our family badge, sar—kinder coat-of-arms, as you may say. My frens and ‘lations used to wear it; but I don’t s’pose dare’s been a ring in de nose of our people since de time of my great-granfader Pete, who lived up ole Calabar, sar. Fac’ is, sar, dar are oder Midges in Florida—low lot, and no ‘lations of mine. Darfor, I stigmatise myself in dem pictur as a nose-ring Midge. Dat is the splanashun of dat fac’, sar.”

At this time a tremendous rustling sound was heard, and in came Mr. Midge’s house-keeper, carrying in her arms a vast bundle of some yellowish, strange-looking material, which she laid on the floor, and went out again.

“Dis yer ‘ternal gout won’t let me get up, genelmen,” remarked Mr. Midge; “but if you’ll be good ‘nough to untie de string, you’ll see what dat ar bundle is de skin of.”

We untied the string as directed, and carefully unrolling the mysterious substance, found it to be the veritable skin Mr. Corker had alluded to—the skin of the alligator. Without doubt it must have been a formidable beast when alive. Its claws were preserved with the skin of the toes, and the horrible array of spiky teeth still showed in the shrivelled jaws. The length of the monster was so great that it extended quite across the room, and then there was sufficient of the tail to turn and extend to the table that stood in the centre.

“What a horrible creature!” we remarked; “why, there’s room within it for half-a-dozen people, at the very least.”

“I reckon it has ‘commmodated many more un dat ar, times on and off,” observed Mr. Midge with a grin—“ten times as many. Why, sar, in my own ‘lection—and I didn’t come into dis yer alligator naberhood till it had been at the man-eating business ‘leven years and over—in my own ‘lection it dewoured nineteen young misses and youfs of the country, to say nothing ‘bout ole folk and lilly children. Why, when I fust was traded to dem ar parts, and was set to work cotton-pickin’” (it was evident that Mr. Midge was launching into his story), “the sensashun ‘mong de niggers was jes about orful. Most ebery monfe

dare'd be a mornin' when de whisper 'He be gone!' or 'She gone!' would be heard, and nobody know whar. How 'em go was de wonder. The last of 'em seen was takin' a walk by de riber in de evenin', and den whiz! off dey goes, never no more seen. Ole massa rale mad, and no won'er. All de young han's worked off de place in dis yar way, and no countin' for it! 'Cus de place!' said he; 'I t'ink it haunted, dat's what I t'ink,' which reely seemed de correctest solution to de mystery, since dar was no possible way for a critter to run off in de way of mortality; dare seemed as though dar must be sometink supermnatal 'bout de business.

"Wal, I kep' my eyes open. I had heard my ole granfader tell witch stories he had heard on down ole Calabar way, and when I'd turned dis yer business ober and ober in my mind till it was regler exhasted, I ses to myself, 'In the fus place, niggers can't be got off widout hands; in de second place, ghosts and witch things aint got hands; darefore whose hands is it as helps 'em off?' I kep' my eyes open a deal wider when I had 'rived at dat ar sensible conclusion, and bymeby I make a discovery.

"Dar was a ole woman—a used-up ole nigger past working—as used to keep a school for young niggers and nuss the babbies of the robuster gals while they went to field-work. She was about the awfullest-looking old nigger as ever you seed, bent all up wif age, and wif hairs all about her chin jes like a man. But dis yer wasn't what fust drawed my 'tention to ole Rosa—it was the strorinary likeness of her face to that of the animal whose skin is now afore us. Specially so of mornin's. I used to take up de milk to her hut for de babbies in de mornin's, so dat's how I know; her face was as like a alligator's as a human critter's could be. Her eyes looked narrer and slitty-like, and her mouth seemed wide and slitty-like, and somehows at them are times she had a way of comin' it over you, coaxing, and carnying, and gettin' dis chile to fetch her wood and turn de mill, which showed her to be berry full of artfulness indeed.

"Howsomdever, dis yere warn't much, but dis t'other whar! One day a young yaller gal—a berry pritty gal she whar—go like 'em all go, nobody know nothing 't all 'bout her. Nobody but me, and I know dis t'ing, I seed her up at ole Rosa's ebening before. Wal, fortnight arter, Pumpkin Jake he wanish. Nobody know, same as 'fore time, 'cept dis chile, and he know sumtink—he know dat Pumpkin Jake go up to ole Rosa's ebening before, like same as yaller gal! And, Laws-a-mighty! dé nex' morning dere was ole Rosa so much more like de alligator den ever dat if she'd ha' snapped my leg off soon as I put it in at de doorway I wouldn't 'a' won'ered in de least.

“Wal, fear I might put my foot in it, I never opened my mouf, but thought I’d keep my eyes open lilly longer.

“‘Take dis yer Kyann pepper up to ole Rosa,’ ses our driver to me one ebening, ‘and tell her to dress the childrin’s toes wid it for de chegoe,’ which p’raps you might know, genelmen, is de bitin’ lilly debil as lays its eggs under de toenail. Wal, I takes up de pepper, and I gets there jes as the dusk was a-loomin’, and it bein’ jes after rain-pour de ground was soft, and I went up de path, and nobody hear; I push open de door, and nobody hear still; and dar what I see but dat ar brown gal Minchin along wif ole Rosa, and ole Rosa was gibin her sometink dat looked like butter in a leaf. Ses she, ‘Walk close to de edge, mind, and look in, and dare you’ll see your lub’s face;’ and she was goin’ on to say moren dat, but just ketchin sight of me, she shet up and gib de gal Minchin a push to de door and sent her off.

“Now I don’t mind a-tellin’ dat I was sweet on dat ar Minchin gal, and it wasn’t kas I’d neber ’clared my lub dat I didn’t t’ink tall stalks of her. After I’d gib de pepper in, I walk home glum. ‘See um lub’s face!’ ses I; ‘who de debil um lub den?’ I couldn’t sleep all de night for t’inking ober it.

“In de mornin’ dare was a rowin’—the brown-eyed Minchin gal was gone. She was regler a favourite with de oberseer, and he cracked round fine about it. Since de gang had struck work de night afore nobody had seen her—on’y me, and I kep’ my tongue quiet. All about de oberseer he ask, ‘Am you see de gal name Minchin?’ He ask of ole Rosa, and she say, ‘Neber seed her dis tree day.’ De big ole lie! Lilly work I did dat day—work of pickin’, dat is to say—but I was berry busy t’inkin’ all de time.

“Come night, I take lilly present and I go to ole Rosa’s hut, and soon as I get in I begins to turn up my eyes and sigh and groan, and not to say a word.

“‘Laws-a-mighty, Mr. Mungo, what’s de matter?’ ses she.

“‘Brest if I knows, ole lady,’ ses I, ‘but I bin like it dese yere two weeks—skeary-like, and a palpitation in dis yere quarter;’ and I laid my hand on my bosom.

“Ole Rosa she grinned. ‘You’re in lub, Mungo, dat’s what it is,’ ses she; ‘you’re in lub wif one of dey gals down plantation.’

“‘Spect it’s wuss nor dat,’ ses I; ‘pears like I’m in lub wif two of ‘em at de outside, and de palpitation comes ob not knowin’ which to take.’

“As I spoke I looked hard at de ole witch, and dare was de ole alligator look growin’ up in her eyes quite plain.

“‘And what you come here for?’ ses she; ‘aint two ‘nough but you must come a-courtin’ me?’

“‘I aint come courtin’ you, granny,’ ses I; ‘Ise come kas I know you’re a gorry sight too old for dem ar weaknesses, and ‘rived at a age what ken take things cool and look at ‘em kinder like in their true shape and colour; can’t you advise me what to do, gran?’

“‘What you gib?’ say she.

“‘Dese ere yearrings,’ I ses; ‘I bought ‘em for one of dey gals, but I can’t make up my mind which, so you may hev ‘em.’

“So I gib her de yearrings, and den she crep’ to de door and put de bar up, and ses she, ‘Mungo,’ ses she, ‘I can’t do not’in’ on my own hook, but if you’ll promise to keep it dark I’ll gib you a charm as will make it cl’ar to you which gal from turrer you should marry.’

“‘Neber fear,’ ses I; ‘let us hab de spell, granny.’

“So she goes to a corner ob de hut, and she scratch up de earth a bit, and she bring out in her claws sometink like butter, and she put it on a leaf and gib it to me.

“‘Dis yere is cuckoo fat,’ ses she; ‘what you do is to rub it into you legs and walk by de riber at night time—dat part of it where de mango-grove begins—and though it neber so dark you shall bymeby see de face of de missey as lub you best shining on de face of de water.’

“‘T’ank you,’ ses I; ‘I’ll use it jes how you ses, neber fear.’

“‘And hark ye, honey,’ ses she, ‘if you so much as breave a whisper of what you’s gwine to do to man, dog, or debil, you may jes as well stay at home, for den de face won’t shine in de riber.’

“‘I wouldn’t tell my own moder, not if she was to beg it till she was yaller,’ ses I, which answer satisfied her, and she took down de bar and let me go.

“Wal, I had all along made up my mind what I was gwine to do, and I went straight away and set about it. I went and rubbed in dat ar yellow stuff. It smelt berry strong—there seemed a kinder flavour of brimstone about ‘mongst oder scents, and I took a mendjous sort of club I’d got ready in the arternoon, and, takin’ care dat nobody saw me, made my way down ‘longside where de mangoes was a-growing by de riber.

“Wal, it was not quite dark, kas of a lilly moon a-shinin’ ober a cloud-bank, and I walked along, holding de club straight down by my leg, kas it mightn’t show, and keepin’ a stiddy eye on de water.

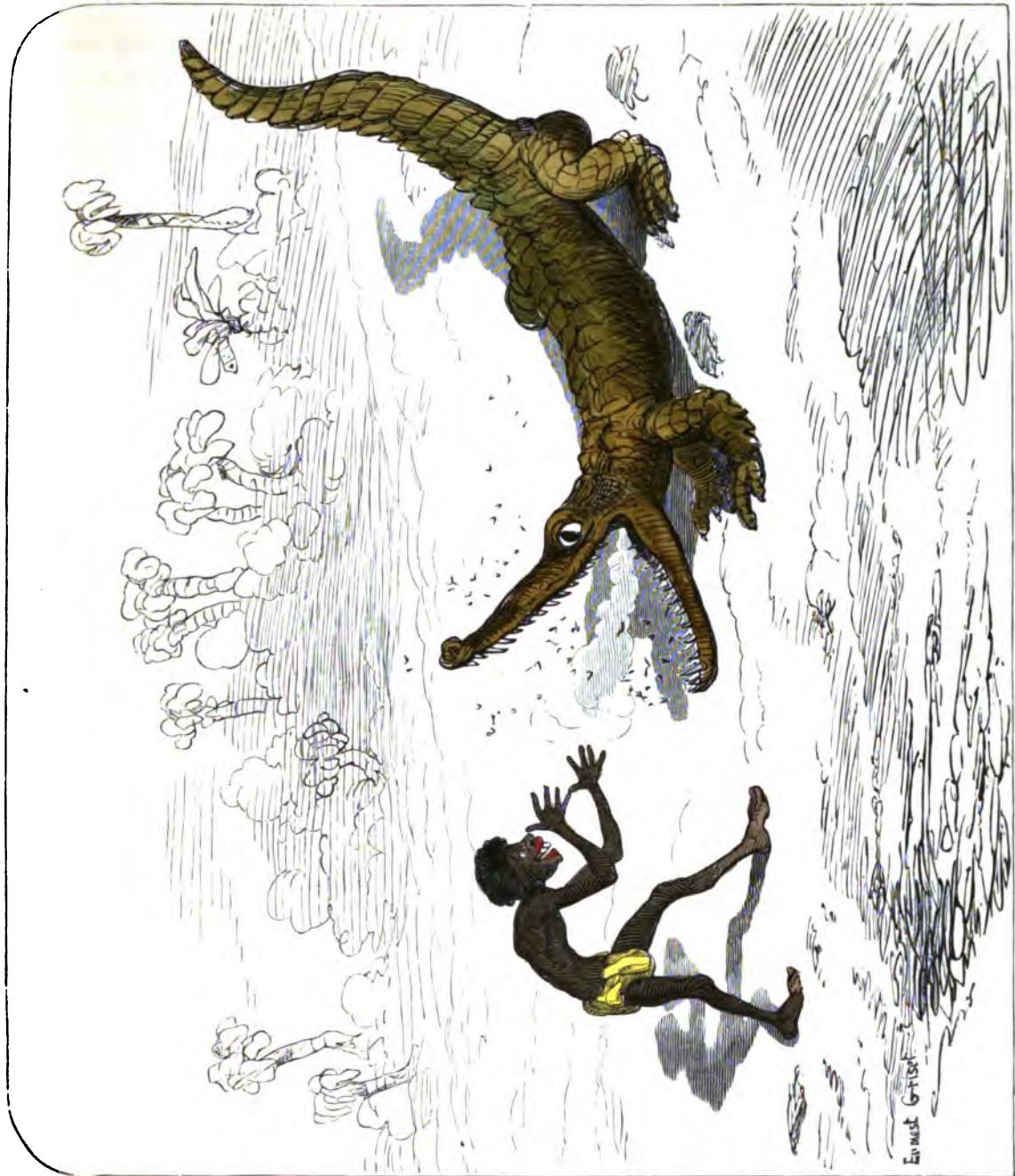
"Pit, pat! I creep along, hardly makin' any noise, and bimeby I hears a lilly sound, no greater den the fall of a leaf, in the water jes behind me, and without alterin' my steps, I puts a eye dat ar way, and dar was de snout I was spectin', poked up and makin' in shore fast, but without any splash or puddling, so that I knowed at once it was the alligator dis chile was come to see—de *witch-alligator*!

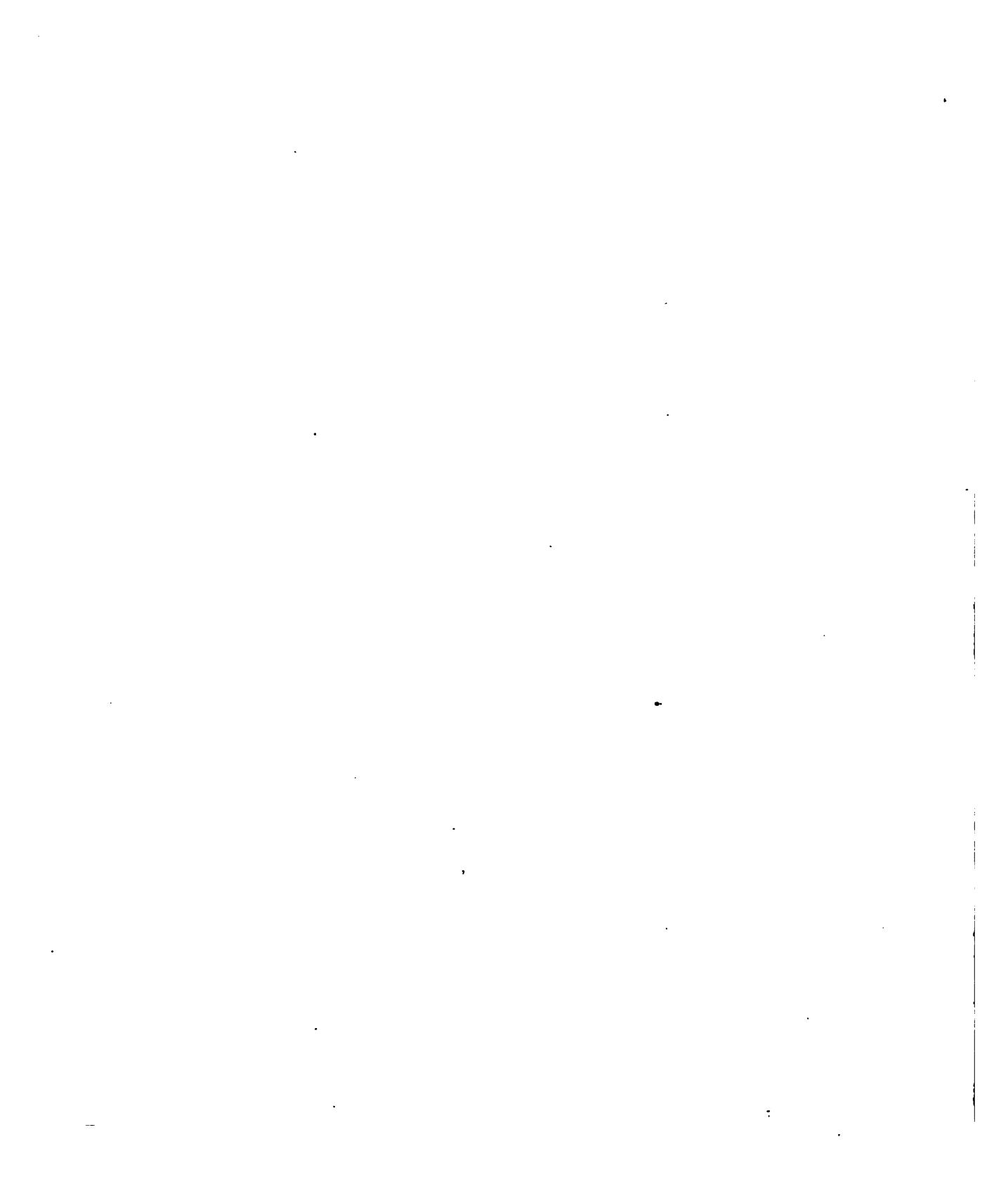
"I wasn't de least skeared; I on'y cotched hold on the club tighter and sidled a little from de edge of de riber. Once more I peeped ober my shoulder, and dere I see Mr. Alligator wif his front paws on de mud, hauling himself out. I sidled furder shore-way, and den he come all de way out, and make a run at my legs.

"But I was ready. 'Not dis yer time,' ses I; and facin' round I caught de brute a orful crack jest atween de eyes, 'nough to have smashed any alligator but a witch un, but wif no oder 'fect den to break de club in my hands like a bacca-pipe. And dat warn't de wust of it. When I reckoned de matter up in my mind afore I started, I made it out dat the danger was nowhar, kas if I fetched it a crack and killed um, dare 'u'd have been an end of de business, and if I fetched un a crack and *didn't* kill un, *dere* would be an end of it, kas it would be stremely glad to 'scape back into the riber. But I reckoned 'wifout my oats,' as de poet ses. The alligator did not slink off; he glared wif his green eyes, and sniffed wif his long, ugly snout, and came at me again.

"But, Laws, whar was the good of his comin' after a nimble nigger such as I was in dem ar days? 'Sides which, I knowed his tickerlarities, one of which whar that the best way of 'scaping from him is to walk round him, kas of his difficulty in turnin' on his own axle. So I thought to myself, 'Golly! if I can't get nothin' else, I'll have sport out of de varmint.' So I run jest a lilly way, and then turnin' round sudden, took a sight fair afore his face, and then walked round him and straight on again, gaining at least a dozen yards while he was turning round after me. 'Dis yere 'll do,' I thought to myself; 'p'raps I may be able to keep him in a temper, so that he won't see which way he's gwine until he gets close up by the quarter whar the hands sleep!'

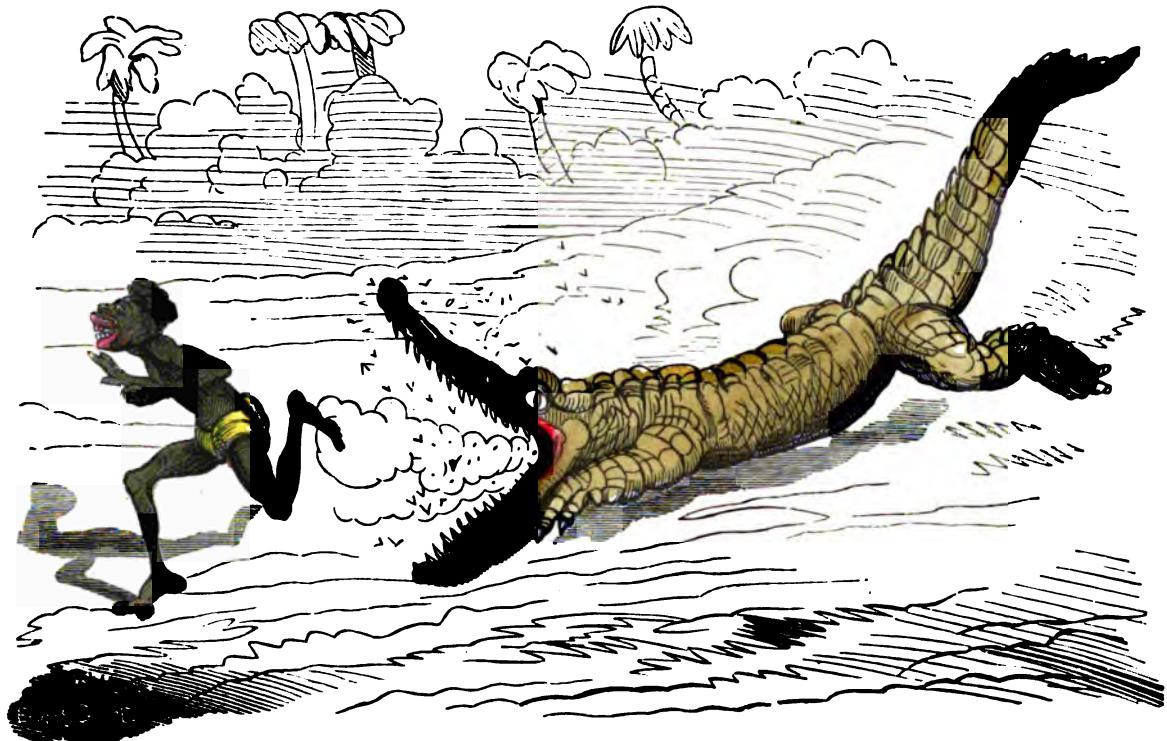
"But once more I reckoned wifout my oats. It warn't like a or'ney alligator, which I knowed from de berry fust, and should have made my kalkerlations 'cordin'. I tried this runnin' round him a second time, and it answered berry well; I tried it a third time, and it didn't answer at all, for jest as I'd run round as far as his tail, he on a sudden turns a reg'ler summerset, bringing his snout so close to my legs that the fiery bref of de beast nigh scorched um.





"Dis yar was bad for me all round, kas, you see, not only did de beast bring it to a matter of hard runnin' by this last bit of manœuvring of his, he set me on de wrong road, causin' me to run away from de road dat led to de plantation, and to take one right out in de open, whar dere was no more'n half-a-dozen trees in as many miles.

"Golly! but dat ar was a sweater, and no mistake. De moon was high in de hebens



THE WITCH-ALLIGATOR, BY THROWING A SUMMERSSET, TURNS THE TABLES.

by dis time, making de way before me cl'ar; and jest about a mile and a quarter furder on I see a tree. T'inks I, 'If I can only gain dat ar, I'll be right, kas climbin' a tree is more'n even a witch alligator is up to.' So I put de steam on, and run a bit faster, de mad critter's fiery bref makin' de presperashun trickle off me like de rain.

"Wal, I reached de tree, and at one jump catched hold on a long, stragglin' kinder limb, that forked out twenty foot about, and ended quite in a fine p'int. I climbed on to de

fork, and looked down, and dar whar de alligator reared on his hind-legs and tail, clawing at de tree with his front-claws, and tryin' hard to come up after me, whinin' and wheezin' jest like an ole woman. It warn't glarin' at me now; it was lookin' mild as milk, and its eyes was streamin' wif tears.

“ ‘ You foolish young nigger ! ’ cried the beast in a wheedlin’ kinder voice, ‘ I’ve a good mind to be quite cross wif you for givin’ me this long run. You neber deserve to win fair lady wif dat ar faint heart of yourn ! ’

“ ‘ What you know ’bout my fair lady, hey ? ’ I knowed de voice in a minute.

“ ‘ What I know ? Don’t I know dat you kem down to de riber to see de face of your true lub in it ? ’

“ ‘ How you know dat ? ’

“ ‘ I know eberyting. I’ve got a message from your true lub. Come down and I’ll whisper it in your ear.’

“ ‘ T’ank you berry much,’ ses I, ‘ but I’ll rather be scused. I t’ink I’ve seed you before.’

“ ‘ Whar ? ’ cried the witch-alligator.

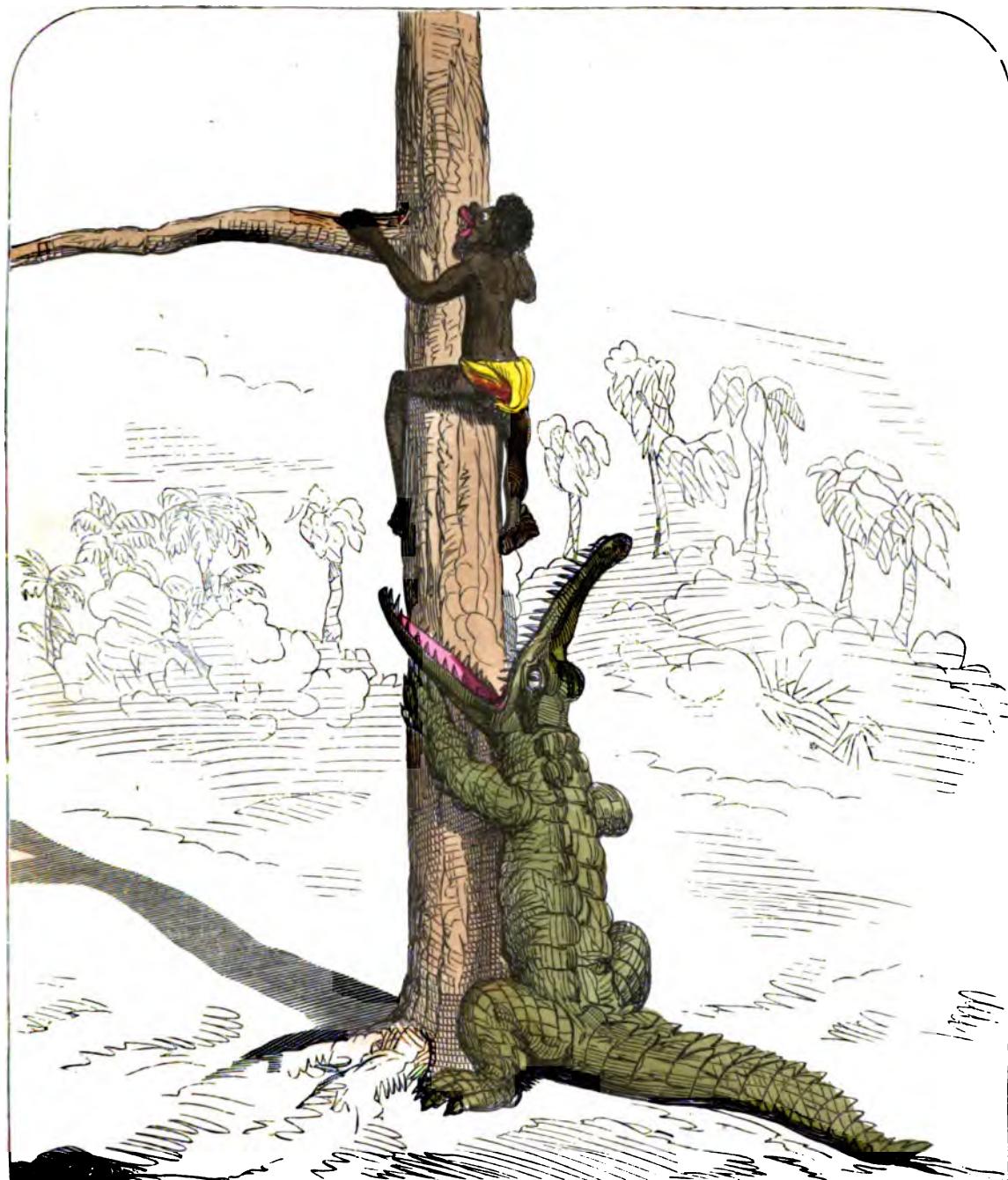
“ ‘ Somebody berry like you, anyhows,’ said I; ‘ somebody dey calls Ole Rosa, up at our place.’

“ De orful howl de critter give when I said dis give me a start dat nearly made me let go de bough.

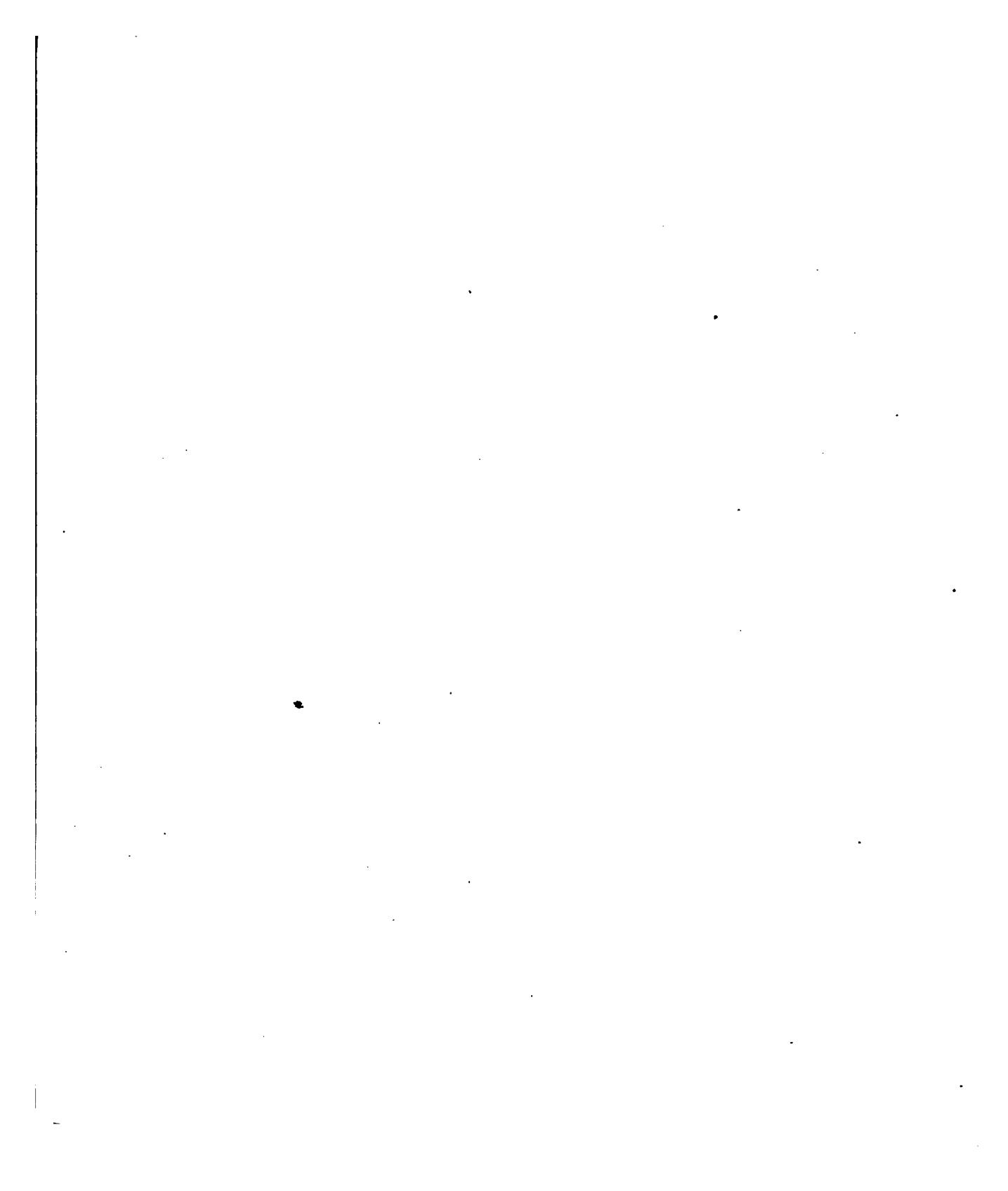
“ ‘ That’s ’nough ! that’s ’nough ! ’ it shrieked. ‘ Now I *must* hab you ! I must, though I tear my claws to de roots in getting up to you.’

“ And with that it bent its tail like a bow, and springing from it, jes managed to hook its front teeth in de bottom part of de limb on which I was sitting; and it was only by backing a bit that I ’scaped a nip. Having so far made good her hold, it was no trouble to her to haul herself up altogether; and berry soon I found myself ’bliged to back to the berry end of de ’jecting bough, which bent and swayed with my weight like a fishin’-rod.

“ It was a narrer bough, as I *have* told you; but so determined was de witch-thing to get at me, dat without t’inking how it was to get back ag’in, it crawled out on to de limb, which soon as it felt the weight began to creak and groan dreffully. Findin’ this, she stood still and looked bothered, and cast her green eyes towards de ground to see how far down it was.



THE WITCH-ALLIGATOR TREES ITS BLACK GAME.



“‘Come, I say, dis here is carryin’ de joke too far,’ say she. ‘Since we can’t agree, we’d better part before we get to quarrelling.’

“‘I’m berry comfortable,’ ses I. ‘If you don’t like it, you can get down de same way as you got up, I spect.’

“‘I spect I can’t,’ snapped de witch-alligator. ‘Help me down, dat’s a good nigger, and I’ll get back to de riber.’

“‘I aint gwine to get down dis yer while,’ ses I. ‘I got up to have a swing, and I’m jes gwine to begin.’

“So saying, I slid to de end of de bough, and hanging on with both my hands, jigged up and down, settin’ de limb rockin’ at a tremenjus rate. Golly, you should hev yeard how de critter took on when it came to dat!

“‘Marcy! marcy!’ it shrieked. ‘I knows dat I’m a wicked ole woman—a fernal ole woman; but, Laws-a-massy sake, let me go, and I’ll neber gib trouble to nobody neber no more. I’ll go down to de riber and stay dere, and gib my mind to ‘pentance.’

“Now de cat was out.

“‘So you’s ole woman, eh?’ said I, gibing de bough a swing dat set her dancin’. ‘What ole woman?’

“‘Oh, oh, Laws-a-mighty!’ she squeaked, opening her ‘ternal ole mouf till you could see down her t’roat nighly. ‘Oh-h! don’t rock no more, good Massa Mungo. I aint got de bref to tell you who I am, up here; but let me down, prese, and I’ll ‘fess to eberyting what you asks me.’

“‘Look here,’ ses I, chucking up my legs ober de bough and hanging still a minute, ‘dere you is, and you’s quite at my massy. De shaking what I’ve gib yer aint not’ing to de shaking what I *can* gib you; and you knows as berry well as I can tell you, dat if I shake you off dat ar perch, down you’ll go and break your ‘ternal ole neck; but I gibs you a chance to awoid dat ar hard fate. What you’s got to ‘fess, ‘fess up dar—de trufe, mind yer, cas I knows all about it ‘fore yer opens yer ugly jaws—and den I’ll find a way of helpin’ you down quickerer eben den you got up.’

“‘You’ll keep your word?’ whimpered de orful ole t’ing.

“‘May I never eat hominy ag’in but I’ll do zactly what I ses if you ‘fesses de ole trufe and not’ing but de trufe.’

“‘Trufe ’bout what? ’bout who I is?’

“ ‘No ‘casion to cut de time to waste tellin’ dat,’ ses I, ‘cas I knows already; you’s ole Rosa, *dat’s* who you are !’

“ When she heard dat she fell a-sobbin’ and cryin’ fit as though to bust herself. ‘Laws-a-me !’ ses she, ‘I fought as he knowed me ! and when he knows dat, he knows three parts, and may as well know de rest.’ Den she up and ‘fesses dis yere.

“ It’s all froo jealousy,” ses she, “ which, young man, you may take advice of a wicked ole ‘oman like me, and shun like p’ison. T’ree-and-forty ‘ear ago,” ses she, “ I lost my fust dear ole man, and havin’ no kinder fault to find wif de state of mattermony, lost no time in lookin’ about me. I was more’n forty year ole, but my ole man had been keerful and saved de dollars, so I found no sort of difficulty in getting a sweetheart. You neber seed him, Massa Mungo—long afore your time dat war—but, Laws sakes ! he *was* a nigger ! De berry finest and han’somest on de plantation, wif all de gals round him like flies round de sugar-hopper. Yet for all dat ar, kas he took me afore ‘em all, I thought that he lubbed me best of all. De ole fool I was ! it was de dollars he lubbed; and when dey was gone, den he larf. He say, when I unbrade him for always gwine away of evenings, ‘ Laws-a-mighty, ole gal, aint it what yer bargained for ? Haint I got sense as de ole hoss, and does he stay in de meadow when he eat it bare ?’ Den he larf ag’in, and go off banging de door.

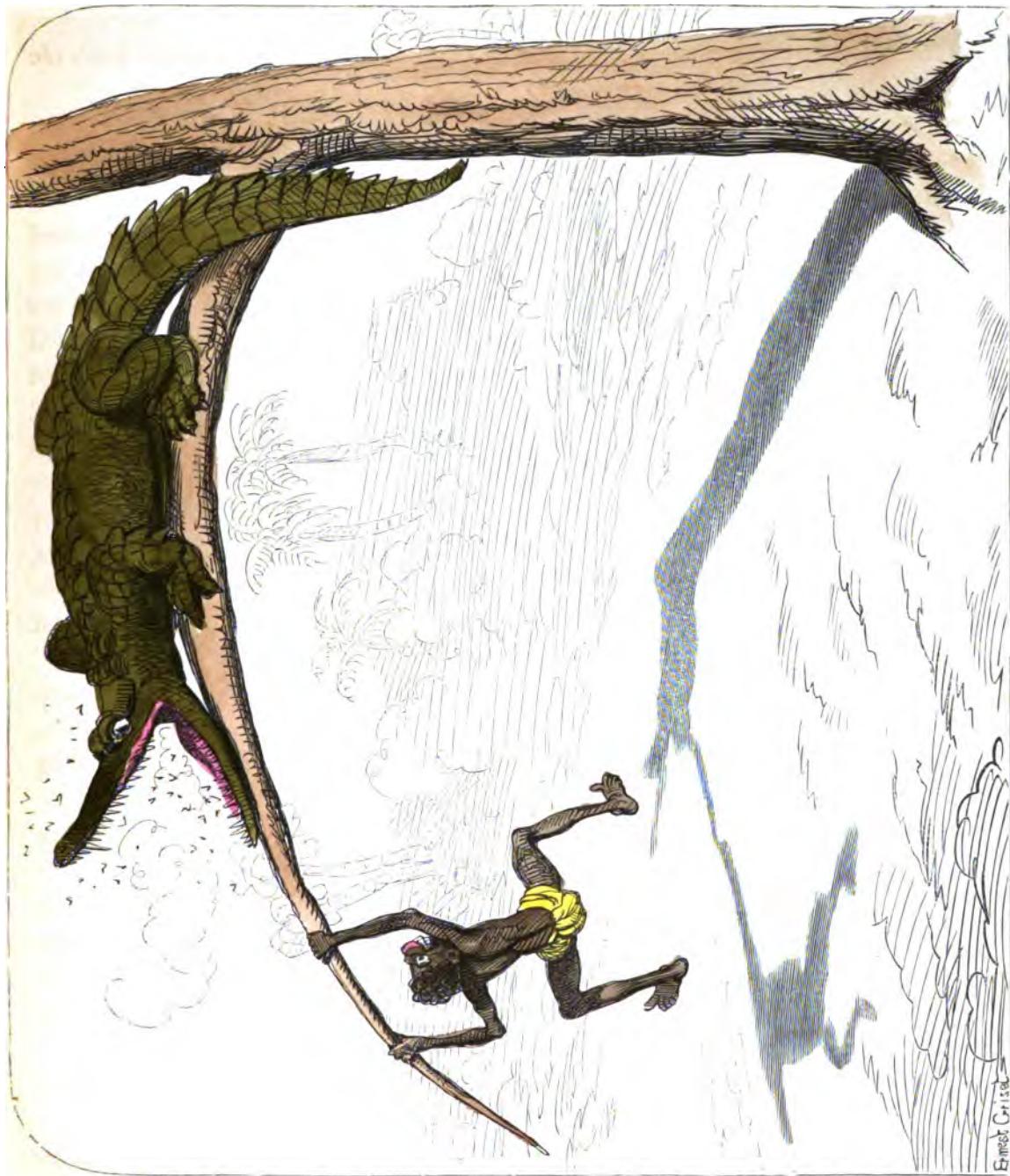
“ Wal, I seed no help for’t all round, so I rage and sw’ar, and call on de debil to help me. Jes at ebening dat whar, and as I called I heered a scratching noise in de thatch, and next minute dere ‘scended from de ceiling, from a kinder spider-web, a yellow t’ing no bigger den a beetle, but shape like a alligator.

“ ‘Ebenin, Missey Snow,’ ses de t’ing. ‘ See, me come when you call me. What you please to warnt ?’

“ Wal, you see, it wasn’t much to be frightened at, dat ar t’ing, no bigger dan a May bug, what I could have cracked under de heel of my shoe. Dat’s whar de debil shows hisself de fader of cunnin’. If he’d ha’ come to me with um hoof and um tail and horns, I’d take fright and had no truck wif him; but seeing him in dis yar shape, I t’ink, ‘ Wal, if you can help me, I don’t mind,’ so when he ask me, I say—

“ ‘ I warnt my ole man dead,’ ses I; ‘ I warnt him dead, kas he lub eberybody and hate me.’

“ ‘ Berry good,’ said the yellow t’ing, drummin’ on de board wif his front claw. ‘ Hab you reckoned on de cost of dat ar job ?’



How "Rosa," THE WITCH-ALLIGATOR, WAS BROUGHT TO CONFESSION.



“ ‘If it cost me all I’ve got, it won’t be much,’ said I, larfin bitter like; ‘he take care ob dat.’

“ ‘Well, you pay all you hab,’ say de yellow t’ing.

“ ‘Eberyting,’ I answer.

“ ‘Do what I bid you ebermore?’

“ ‘Laws-a-mighty! he look as though I might crack him wif my nail! ‘All *you* bid? Oh yas,’ I answers.

“ ‘Don’t say yas too light,’ ses he. ‘T’ink ober what I say;—you gib yourself to me alway and ebery way. Do as I bid yer, when I bid, and how I bid.’

“ ‘Go ’way,’ ses I; ‘I said yas, and yas I means.’

“ ‘Berry well,’ ses the yaller t’ing, ‘jes open de top hooks of your gown,’ ses he. ‘Don’t flinch; it won’t hurt you wus than de prick of a needle.’

“ So I opened de top hooks, and de yaller t’ing swing on to my bosom, jes ober my heart, and he make a bite, and he stay dere jes a lilly while. Den he swing off, lookin’ red more’n yaller, and he make um thread long and swing down into de corner, and dere he spit.

“ ‘Dat all,’ ses he. ‘Now wait till Dan come home, and go to sleep; den you get up and scratch in de corner dere, and you find de yaller charm. Rub him legs wif it, and when he go out he neber come back.’

“ And, without another word, the t’ing clomb up his thread and go into de thatch. Den I look at my breast whar he bite, and I find a staring red shape jes like a alligator. I rub it, but it won’t move; I rub and rub till de skin ruff off, but de red mark in too deep, and won’t come out. Den I sit down in de dark, berry, berry sorry, and cry, and lub Dan so dat I wish he come home dat I may tell him all about it.

“ Many hour I sit so, and bimeby I h’ar a gigglin’ and a larfin jes nigh to our door, and I peep through de chink, and dar I see my Dan wif two of de misses from de big house, playin’ round jes as though he had no wife at all. Den all my lub for him dry up, and I set my teef, and I feel dat ar staring red t’ing ober my heart sinkin’ deeper.

“ Dat night Dan tummel drunk to bed, and I creep out and get the yaller charm, and do what de little alligator debil say.

“ Nex’ mornin’ Dan get up shaky, and head fit to split. He say, ‘I go for cooler in de riber, ole woman. Get de brekfus ready ’gainst I come back ag’in.’

"But he neber come back ag'in. He jump into de riber, and nobody eber see him ag'in. Cramp, dey say it was, kas dey couldn't find no turrer reason, for Dan was de best swimmer on de 'state.

"Wal, dat night I go to bed, and I t'ink I dream. I t'ink I dream dat missing my Dan I get up, and go down to de riber to look for him, and dat while walking up and down de bank I feel myself changing, growing flat and growing long, and wanting to creep into de riber; and I do creep close up to it, and I peep in, and dere I see dat I'm turned into a alligator. And I go into de riber, and I swim about, and I like it, and presently I meet de yaller t'ing dat come down from de thatch to give me de charm. But now he was not little; he was long as a log, and broad and big, wif teef in him's jaws long as hoe-spikes. But I wasn't a bit 'fraid. I took his paw, and said I was berry glad to see him, and he said de same.

"'Whar Dan?' I say.

"'I eat him,' he answer, 'and kas I eat him you's got to come here ebery night and fish for me while I lay at de bottom and wait.'

"Den I wake, glad to find it on'y a dream; but when I get up I find de shoes wet, and wet footmarks on de floor, and wet marks jes dyin' out from de door down de path that leads to de riber.

"And ebery night since dat ar time I go for lilly time down to de riber and fish for de ole one. Dat all for many year, till at last he say, 'You's ole and lazy, you don't fish well. You must bait de game and lure it down yere. And fust I won't, and he bite and beat me, and den I do. I tell um fortunes and gib 'em de yaller charm dat still grow down in de corner, and dey go to de riber and I pull 'em for de ole one. Dar, now you knows all, Massa Mungo; now you keep your word, I know, and help me down."

"'Is dat de whole trufe and not'in' but de trufe?' I ask.

"'Not'in' but de trufe,' she answer.

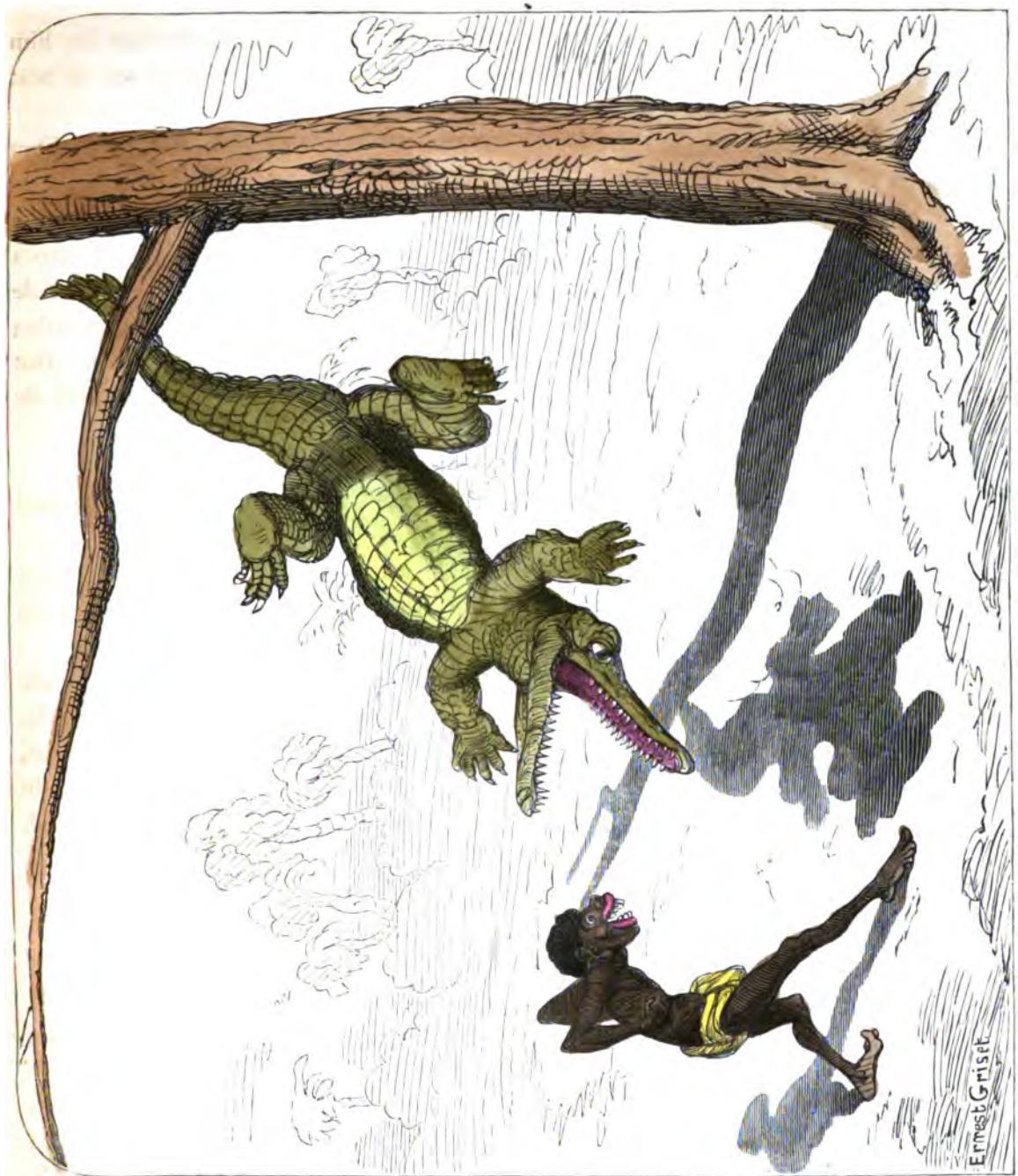
"'And you aint got no more to 'fess?'

"'Not'in' at all.'

"'Den I'll keep my word,' say I; 'I promised dat I would help you down quicker den you got up, eh? Here goes, den!'

"And as I spoke I dropped from de end of de bough to de ground, and as I did so, as a natural consumquence, up went de bough, shooting de witch-alligator up in de air, and down she come whop, wif her neck broke and dead as door-nails.

Ernest Griset



means to gib you your liberty, Mungo, but I wants to gib you sometink more. What shall it be?"

"Wal, massa," ses I, "I should be berry sorry to see the liberty you gibs me goin' about any other ways than 'spectable; s'pose massa frows in sometink de way of a 'nuity like?"

"Ole massa he larf. 'It's berry seldom we meets wif so much modesty along wif so much walor,' ses he, 'and when met it oughter be 'couraged.'

"So I got de 'nuity, and when ole massa die I got lilly bit more, and so I t'ink now, genelmen, I trabel; so I do, and I bring de skin wif me case when I tell dat ar storner story folk shouldn't believe me. Here's your health, sar, and yours, genelmen bofe, and berry much 'bliged to you for your company."

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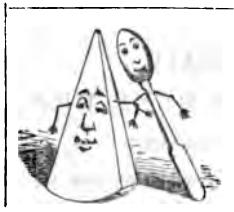
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Wedge and Wooden Spoon.
See p. 272.



Egyptian Hieroglyphic verb,
to be drunk, showing the ampu-
tation of a man's leg. See
under **BRAKX LBG** (viz.
Strong Drink) in the Diction-
ary, p. 81.



See TWO UPON TEN, i
the Dictionary, p. 264.

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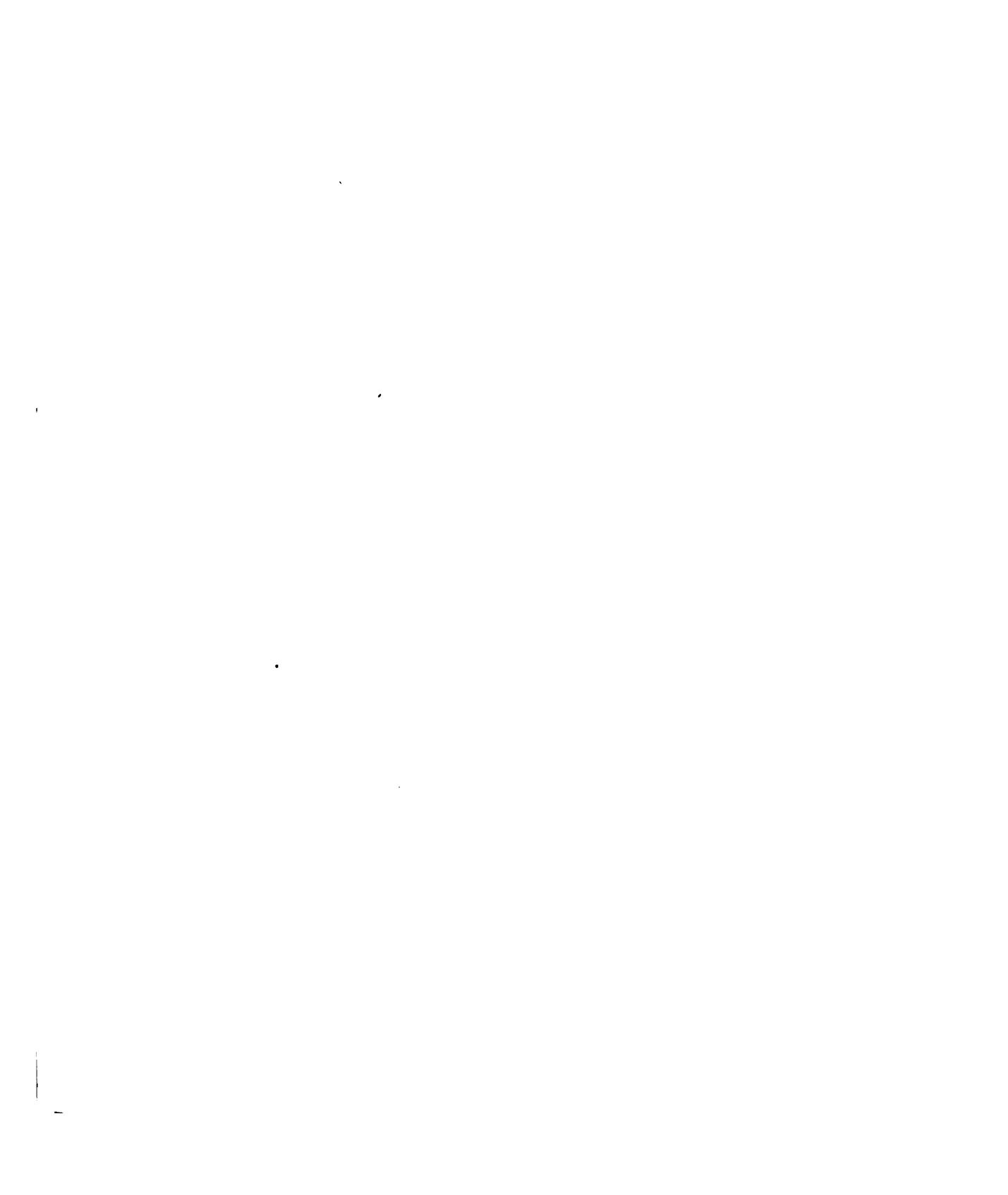
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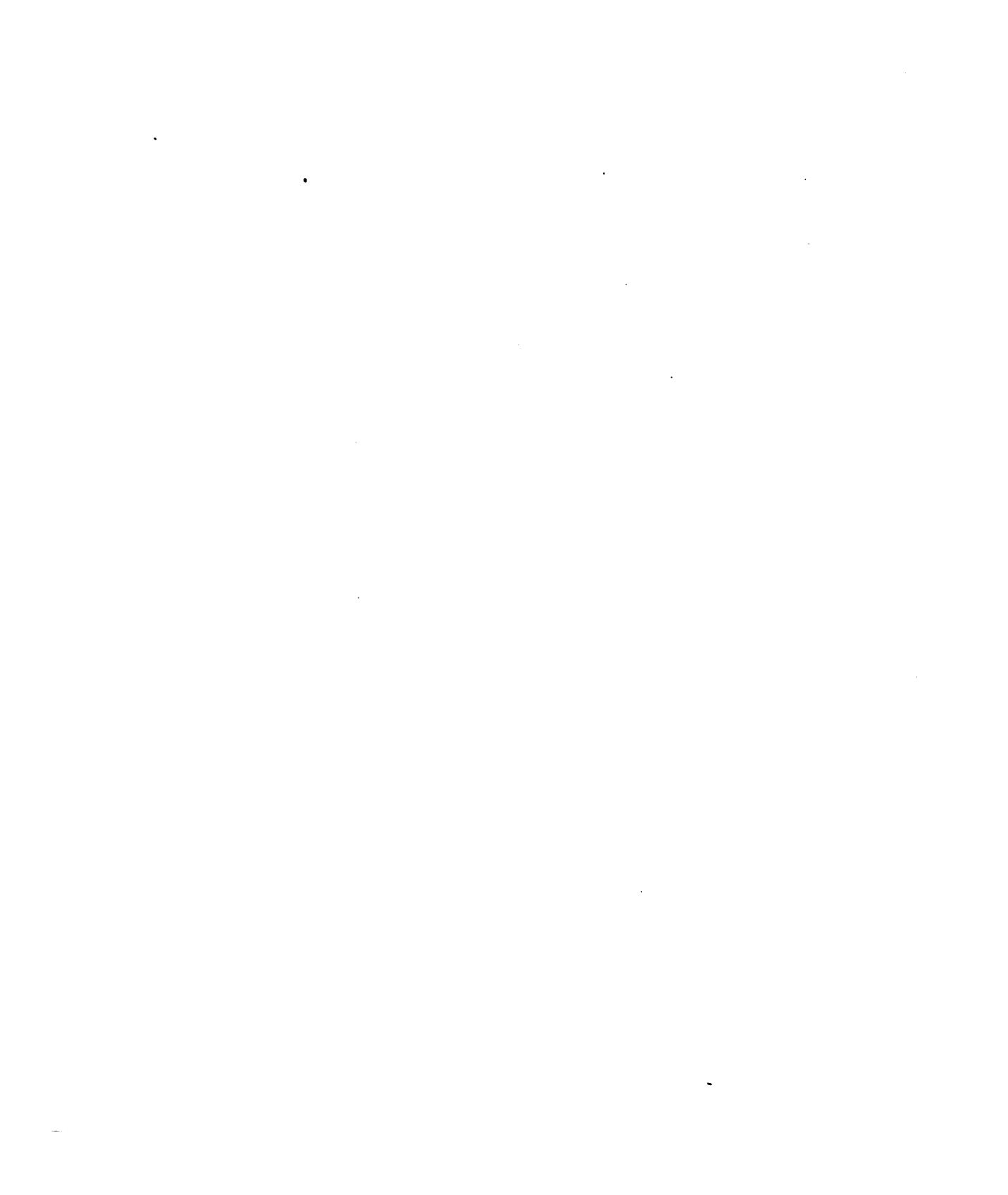
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